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The SHOOTING TIMES

and Country Magazine

SEVENTY-FOURTH YEAR FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28th, 1956 1s. 3d. WEEKLY

. . . . TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

Counting Partridges

"Plenty of partridges about" says the optimistic member of the syndicate. "The roadman saw a covey of twenty yesterday, and there's any amount of fifteens!"

Heads wag approvingly and, on the strength of such information, the regular weekly shooting programme is no doubt launched — unless, of course, the bag is examined at the end of the first day's shooting to see how the ratio of *young* birds compares with the *old.* One can also get a reasonably accurate idea of what there will be to shoot, by taking a simple census of the birds. In March the pairs can be counted from a car—using binoculars—during the first and last three hours of daylight, when the birds are feeding out in the open: about 600 acres can be dealt with in a day. And, in August, a sample of the old birds should be counted along with their young: one cannot see them all at this time of the year, but a sample accounting for about a third of the old stock is plenty. Barren pairs and little groups of old birds must also be included, and it is important to check the ages of so-called coveys, and not to assume that they contain two old birds. This gives the "production rate" of young-per-pair, taking into account all the losses—nests and young—which have occurred up to August.

By applying the August figure of young birds produced to the number of March pairs, one has an estimate—more reasonable than the roadman's forecast—of the total population prior to shooting.

When calculating what number can be shot in the season, however, one must remember "winter wastage." Between August and the following March, about one-third—maybe more — of the stock will be lost from causes other than shooting, which figure must be added to the breeding stock to be left.

Issued in the interests of better game conservation by the makers of ELEY-KYNOCH cartridges

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SLIPPED DISCS

FARMERS have always formed the backbone of sport in this country. As far as hunting in its several forms is concerned, they still constitute a long and solid spinal column which remains upright and unbowed by the weight of opposition that only serves to stiffen its resistance.

Unhappily this steadfastness and strength does not always extend to shooting. There are, unfortunately, too many slipped discs.

The cause of this malady appears to be twofold; either it is due to negligence or downright selfishness. Of both we have recently had plentiful examples.

Notorious amongst the latter has been the blatant disregard by numerous farmers of the 1954 Protection of Birds Act. Although protected under this two-year-old law until September 1, duck have been shot again this year in no small numbers from August 12, and even, in many worse cases, since the first day of that month. The argument that they have been damaging crops only emphasises a loophole in the law, but what is more alarming is the greedy attitude of most of the culprits, who take the short view that if they do not shoot home-bred mallard early they will have no chance to shoot them later on. Brazenly they flaunt the law with no thought for the future, and quite regardless of the fact that their actions can only result eventually in, at the worst, further, stricter protection, and at best a decline in the present duck population.

Every day we hear of pigeon and vermin shooting sought, and permission turned down. In the light of myxomatosis and its aftermath, the designation of clearance areas and the penalties which failure to comply with Government regulations implies, one would think that responsible outside assistance in the destruction of pests would be welcomed, but such is by no means always the case. Even making allowance for the let-downs that farmers have suffered in the past from unscrupulous and trigger-happy shooters, many are still loath to enlist voluntary help from responsible shooting men. As a result vermin nests and multiplies unhindered on too many holdings simply because of the selfishness and narrow mindedness of many owners and tenants.

Without the support of the farmer, shooting can never prosper. The plain and unpleasant truth is that there is a large number of farmers nowadays who do not care a jot for anything but their own immediate sport. So long as they can enjoy a day's shooting with their friends with the minimum of effort they will be satisfied, but they fail to realise that this state of affairs is destined for speedy oblivion.

There is a move afoot in several districts to combine individual holdings into local units of game preservation, in which resources will be pooled to ensure that shooting shall be preserved and bettered by mutual arrangement which will include the destruction of vermin over a wide area and the rearing of pheasants and partridges by all who hold a sporting stake in the district.

Unless this idea takes hold, and those who own and farm the land realise that to enjoy their sporting heritage they must make some effort to put back what they take out of it, the days of game shooting in this country, already in a parlous state, are severely numbered.

THE SHOOTING TIMES AND COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Official Organ of
THE WILDFOWLERS' ASSOCIATION
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

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The wild life of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust. We must account for it to those who come after.—King George VI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

A Worthy Cause

The Gun and Allied Trades Benevolent Society owes its existence to the late Mr. W. P. Dover, who in 1926 had a collection taken up at the first "Long Sufferers" dinner for a well-known character in the trade who had fallen on very hard times. And so the idea of this Benevolent Society was conceived. The late Billy Dover prepared the scheme and put it forward at the second annual "Long Sufferers" dinner. The newly-formed Society had to be registered with the Registrar of Friendly Societies and is governed by a rigid set of rules drawn up through the Friendly Societies Act 1896-1929.

The Society is managed by a committee drawn from most of the famous firms in the trade. It looks after the servants of the trade, both retired and still at work; in the first place if they cannot live comfortably on pension and small savings and in the second if they are sick or injured. For a few years now some £500 or more has been paid out annually; subscribed mostly by mastermen in the trade, but also in collecting boxes from the men at the bench. Little is received from the sportsman himself, probably because he knows nothing of the Society, and because nobody has ever told him that possibly the very men who helped to make his gun are now retired and in their old age can ill afford a pipe of tobacco or glass of beer.

The Hon. Secretary of the Society is Bernard Powell, 35-37 Carrs Lane, Birmingham 4, and now that I have drawn their attention to this worthy but little known cause, perhaps more shooting men would like to show their appreciation in the usual way.

New Nature Reserves

Two new Nature Reserves are announced by the Nature Conservancy. The first is Morden Bog, near Wareham in Dorset, a unique variant of southern heathland, which carries a rich flora and fauna, both vertebrate and invertebrate. It shares many characteristics with the heaths of Purbeck and the New Forest, including some of the rarities, e.g. a grasshopper *(Chorthippus vagans)* and an ant *(Formica picea)*, which nests in sphagnum bog. Two of the insects—a digging, predatory wasp *(Pompilus rufus)* and an ant *(Formica pratentis)*—are not known to occur elsewhere in Britain. Morden Bog is the most interesting remnant of the great heaths which once stretched from Dorchester to Wareham and were described in Thomas Hardy's novels as "Egdon Heath."

The second, Wren's Nest in Worcestershire, is internationally famous as a classic geological exposure of Upper Silurian rocks. The Wenlock Limestone (known also as the Dudley Limestone) has yielded a magnificent fossil fauna of probably well over 300 species, all in a state of perfection such as no other locality in Britain exhibits. This includes the trilobites, shells, corals, sea-lilies and other marine life of the time that the strata were laid down in the sea, some 330 million years ago. Fossils have been described and figured here since Dr. Plot's work of 1686. Specimens from Wren's Nest are preserved in museums all over the world, and there is a fine collection of them in the Dudley Public Library.

Rabbit News

Enquiry in my own area has revealed hardly a rabbit killed during harvest; they are still few and far between. I hear that a strong revival is taking place in parts of the Midlands and that the late harvest has delayed any anti-rabbit operations, as must have been the case elsewhere.

A combined effort has been made by British Railways and the Ministry of Agriculture to destroy rabbits in the embankment along the disused Monmouth-Usk branch line, where thick undergrowth has made the detection of burrows impossible. Recently an engine hauling a truck on which spraying equipment had been installed, moved along the line and the undergrowth was sprayed with a selective weed-killer strong enough to kill scrub and trees but harmless to the grass which holds the embankment firm.

When the undergrowth is dead the Ministry's gassing squads will move in.

There is, unfortunately, news now of fresh outbreaks of myxomatosis in several areas, including Hampshire and Dorset. At the moment it appears that no more virulent form the disease is to blame. Rabbits that escaped myxomatosis earlier are now getting it.

Crocketts on the Exe

Life is becoming insupportable for wildfowl on the Exe, according to the Devonshire Bird Watching and Preservation Society. Young Davy Crocketts inspired by their film hero are saving up to buy guns and harrying the birds on the river.

"Killed himself a bar-goose when he was only three?"

Without Comment

"From August 13-24 the proprietor and his house party shot 540 grouse, 4 hares, 3 snipe, 1 wild duck."

Extract from a report from an Argyllshire moor published in The Field.

AUCEPS.

In winter, particularly, crows get a fair "picking" inland and along the shore of birds lost by the wildfowler.

More Marshland Jottings

by Tower-Bird

WIGEON begin to arrive in this country at the end of August, and in the second week of September, when I attended an Executive Committee meeting of W.A.G.B.I. in Birmingham, some of those present were telling me that there were a very fair number of birds showing up, despite the time of year.

On September 8, while flighting inland mallard here near the south coast, I heard a wigeon calling, and wondered whether it was a bird which had bred (as they very occasionally do) in the south-eastern counties, or whether, perchance, it was a pricked bird which had remained in the neighbourhood all summer. Being out at dusk and dawn throughout the year, I am sure that I should have seen, or heard it before, had it been a pricked bird, though it may, of course, have come up or down river recently, or it may have recovered some of its powers of flight after the moult, like the tufted I mentioned a few weeks ago. Anyway, it was good on that evening, as the mallard began to get restless and work themselves up into an almost hysterical quacking before making off to the barley stubbles on the hill-tops, to hear that clear whistle of my favourite duck and to be answered by it as I, myself, whistled a welcome. I searched the marshes next day, but of wigeon there was no trace.

As an illustration of how quickly the crows get to work, even on ground where I persecute them from the egg to the gibbet as it were, I was walking the other evening across a marsh when a party of five mallard passed just within range, flying from west to east. I had one shot at the last bird, which turned back on its course and sloped downwards towards the bank-high river three hundred yards away and on the far side of a narrow length of flood-water.

A Dog Obeys!

Now, I do not know what Don was doing, or where he was looking when the mallard approached, and I, myself, did not see them until they were just in range and just going out of it. But a second after I fired and knew that I had hit my bird, I shouted to the dog, "Go on! Go on!" Usually he is as quick, and sometimes quicker at seeing birds than I am, but he must have been intent on something else on this occasion, for we were not expecting to get a shot just them. At all events, on my command, away he went due east—with head up and a sharp eye on the four fast-flying duck. He had not seen the fifth turn and slant into the river. Since the tide was running full and running out, aided by a heavy flow of flood-water, it seemed an impossible task to wade through the strip of inland flood, reach the river, and then collect a wing-tipped duck. By the time we had reached the bank, the bird might well be half-a-mile away. But had I known (or even thought) that it might have received a shot pellet or the plural elsewhere than in a wing, I would certainly have made a search for it.

The Early Bird . . .

The sun had not risen far above the horizon next morning, when I passed the spot of the previous evening's incident, and thought that I would walk along the river bank in case I might find the bird alive and afloat. In fact, it had died and its body now lay on the grass where the tide had left it. For a yard round the body feathers and down lay scattered in an almost perfect circle. There was a light patch of green making its appearance on the head; the wings lay open, with the breast-bone exposed to the sky, for already (though rats *may* have started to gnaw it) a crow or crows had stripped every vestige of flesh from the breast. I noted a single crow fly up from the spot while we were as yet far away. I could have sworn that the duck had been only slightly wing-tipped, but (and I am assuming it was the body of the same bird) evidently it had also been mortally hit and must have died, I think, soon after it touched down. Yes, there is a moral and a lesson to be learned from this little story.

Incidentally, one of the shots which gives me most satisfaction is that offered by a quickly-departing crow which has been feeding on the ground just round the corner of the hedge when it sees you. If the hedge is of any height and density at all, it forms a barrier through which the bird cannot pass, so that it is compelled to fly along parallel with it. Away from you it goes, attempting to put on its fastest speed while turning its head from right to left in order to look back at you. At times, such a bird is rising at a steepish angle, intending to top the hedge at the earliest possible moment, and, though it seems an easy enough shot, it is not difficult to shoot below it — as the tyro shoots below even the long tail of a rising cock pheasant.

A crow departing thus at speed always reminds me of my youthful rowing days when coach or cox sharply ordered you to "give her ten," and you fairly speeded up your stroke—as does a crow its wings.

A shooting man once assured me that no bird put a hedge or tree *intentionally* between itself and you, because naturally enough no bird understood the difficulties of mankind "aiming" a gun at a departing target. In a sense, perhaps, he was right, for the object of a bird, under stress of danger, is to get on the far side of the hedge as quickly as possible, or to keep a tree-trunk between itself and danger simply because it does not want its enemy to see it, or the direction it takes, and therefore does its best to get and keep out of sight.

Stalking In The Wild

In the case of, say, a sparrow-hawk, that bird will quickly vanish over a hedge-top if you take it by surprise; and it also throws itself over a hedge-top in order to catch food, by such tactics flying into a flock of sparrows or finches feeding just out a few yards from the hedge. The flock may fling itself back into the hedge like a handful of cast gravel, but the hawk will have by then departed with one small bird in its talons.

We have all seen a cat stalk its prey by making use of every available bit of cover. I have several times seen a fox do the same, on one occasion using the only clump of thistles showing above a waste of snow (and two of us once stood for a time and watched a small covey of partridges creeping over short-grazed pasture to what appeared to be heaps of sandy-coloured earth thrown up by moles, but which was, in fact, a fox deliberately "decoying" the birds).

The stoat will thread its way through long grass or other cover, every now and again lifting its front feet from the ground and taking a "decko" at its intended victim. A weasel will vanish underground on open land, making use of the run of a mole to stalk its prey, every now and again thrusting up so that its head breaks surface. I have never, however (unless you count the rather different method of attack of the aforementioned sparrow-hawk) seen a predatory bird actually stalk its prey, using cover to do so, although I observed a barn-owl drop down on a mouse and miss it, and then waddle about the grass, peering over the taller blades in searching stalk for its would-be victim.

I have often wondered whether a sparrow-hawk, for instance, ever attempts to knock a sitting pigeon off an exposed nest; I have never seen any evidence to suggest it. The only incident I can recall of anything even approaching a "stalk" by a predatory bird was on an occasion when a green woodpecker was chased (in play ?) by a hen kestrel and the former dashed into the safety of a hole in the top of a dead, hollow tree. Instead of keeping quiet and saying nuffin', the woodpecker kept up the most fearful yelling I ever heard, and seemed to be trying to *get out* of its retreat, while the kestrel flew round and round the spot in tight circles and made a dive at the more colourful bird every time it stuck out its head. And all the time, for nearly five minutes, the woodpecker kept up a continual hollering.

Once or twice, however, the kestrel settled on a small outstanding dead branch, as though waiting there ready to pounce when the woodpecker bolted, but the latter, although appearing badly to want to escape, actually showed no more than its head and neck, and eventually the kestrel flew off, no doubt well content with the sport it had been enjoying and the noisy consternation of the foolish woodpecker.

Hope Deferred?

by Henry Fletcher

I HAVE recently returned from a moor in Yorkshire where I have had the pleasure of shooting for many years. This moor stands fairly high, and is well provided with heather that is burnt regularly. There is also some rough ground at the lower levels which is covered with bent and rushes. Various small streams assure an adequate supply of water. The whole moor is subdivided into three beats of more or less the same size, and comprises a southern part, a central section and a northern one. The custom has been to drive each of these four times in the season, thus making twelve days' driving altogether.

There is rough ground at the lower levels covered with bent and rushes.

Previously to 1954 the bags obtained varied little from year to year, with a maximum of 900 and a minimum of 780 brace. The best bag recently was made in August, 1952, when 120 brace of grouse were killed by eight guns on the middle beat during the course of the day.

In 1954 a sad change came over this happy hunting ground. Only 162 brace were killed that season, and of these 94 brace were old birds, and only 68 brace were young. The northern beat proved the most disappointing, and the only time it was shot the eight guns who were out shared eleven birds between them.

The next year things were even worse. On August 12, 1955, eight guns killed 23 brace on the southern beat, and of these 36 grouse were old birds and only 10 were young. The next day on the central section the same guns had only killed three brace of birds by lunch-time, and then ceased shooting. This was just three years after 120 brace had been killed on this beat. It was thought it would be a waste of time to visit the northern section in view of its condition the year before, and this ended the shooting for the year, with a total bag of 26 brace for the whole season.

Practically Down and Out

Here then was a moor which in the past could be relied upon to produce 700 or 800 brace in a season, and was now so reduced in the course of two years as to be practically down and out. Post mortems there were, of course, and the verdict generally brought in was migration, or disease, or both. Whatever the cause, or causes, might be, this was small consolation for those who had spent happy days on this moor in the past, and were now contemplating a cessation of all shooting for an indefinite time in the future.

All concerned were prepared to sacrifice the immediate future, if only by some means or other a sufficient stock could be built up to repopulate the moor; and it was agreed that only when there was a surplus above what was essential, should shooting be resumed. The possibility of any shooting in 1956 seemed remote, but we had perforce to possess our souls with what patience we could, and await the result of the next nesting season. Hope may spring eternal, but common sense and all the probabilities were against us, and it was with anxiety rather than any optimism that we awaited the outcome. Eventually, it was decided there should be no shooting in August, but that there should be one day early in September, and any further course of action should depend entirely upon what we saw on that day.

Nevertheless, when the day came, and in spite of all the adverse factors against us, there was a sense of hopefulness in the air, a condition due largely to the unexpectedly good reports which had by this time been published about a number of moors both in Scotland and also in the north of England.

We had a good way to walk to reach our butts, but were all in place by 11 o'clock, which was the time at which the drive was to start. And so we waited; the critical moment had arrived, and the next few minutes would be big with fate. Firing started at the top end of the line, and then became fairly general. There were very few singletons or barren pairs. Good coveys were noticeable; family parties were coming over fairly regularly in lots of seven, eight and nine, and even more. Also occasionally two or three lots had merged together, and the general conclusion was "A nice show of birds," or "Far more than expected." As we moved away, we learnt that the first drive had yielded 20 brace. This proved the most killing drive of the day, but by the time it came to an end the bag had risen to 75 brace. This compared with 23 brace over the same ground a year before; and now hope was in the ascendant.

Put to the Test

But perhaps this was premature: we had not at this stage reached the really crucial point. This southern beat had provided a moderate supply of grouse last year; it was the other two beats which had been such failures. Had *they* recovered? With such a pitiably small breeding stock left over from the year before, was it at all possible that these beats could be regenerated to such an extent in a single season, that any shooting over them could be justified? This was put to the test the next day and the day after.

The first drive on the middle moor was not quite as good perhaps as one had now come to expect, but the second drive settled the issue. Soon after it had started, one good covey after another began to fly past the butts, and even more birds crossed the line during the third drive. We went into lunch with a song in our hearts, and completely puzzled how such a transformation had come about. However, the birds were there—that was the main thing—the explanation, whatever it might be, was a minor matter. At the end of the day we had 83½ brace in the bag as compared with 3 brace the year before!

There still remained the third beat, the northern end which had produced 5½ brace in 1954 and was not thought worth trying in 1955. We reached our butts; it was blowing a gale, and raining as well. Visibility was very poor; the oncoming birds could hardly be seen where there was a background of burnt heather. However, we saw quite a nice lot of birds in comparison with what might have been expected. This is the smallest beat of the three, with four drives only. The weather improved in the afternoon, and we ended the

(Continued on page 649, col. 3)

View of the middle beat, where 86½ brace were killed on September 4, this season.

The Young Shot

The Front Line

by Petrel

AFTER more than thirty years of white-collared work behind the portals of a West End bank, Uncle D. (no relation to Kerry D.) has retired. He has forsaken his exhaust polluted Mayfair for the salt-tanged, bracing breezes of East Anglia, and his suburban doll's house in its regimented row for a sixteenth century cottage that for once lives up to what the estate agents call an ideal situation. Before it lies the village inn, behind it the churchyard and beyond the mist-green acres of marshland kissed twice a day by an ever-faithful tide, above which an ever fickle sky blushes and frowns and smiles and glares, depending on its temperamental mood.

The beater's burden is often a heavy one.

Within the cottage may be seen more evidence of change. No bowler hat or brief case, mackintosh, umbrella, overcoat hangs from the pegs inside the narrow hall. Instead, their place is taken now by deerstalker and gamebag, waterproof trousers, smock, dog leads and game carriers, while in the corner behind the door stand sticks of varying weights and lengths, some gnarled and split and peeling, others shiny, smooth and newly cut.

On the hearthrug a springer spaniel, sleek, hardy and solemn-eyed, has succeeded the bloated, grumbling, matchbox-chewing bull-pup and from the kitchen there floats on the smouldering pine log scented air a richer smell of port-perfumed jugged hare. Without exploring further you would conclude that Uncle D. was a shooting man and you would be right first time—save for one thing.

Hard to Get

Conspicuous by its absence is a gun, for the simple reason that although he is out at least three days a week in covert, stubble, roots or on the marsh, Uncle D. never shoots. He plays, nonetheless, an essential part in the harvest of game and wildfowl which his native heath so abundantly provides, sees perhaps more of the day's sport than most, and is very much in the front line.

He is, in short, a member of that humble and oft-forgotten fraternity which is so essential to good sport—a beater. As beating is his interest and his services are given voluntarily and efficiently, he is no small asset to his neighbourhood, and heavy are the calls upon his time during the shooting season. For good and willing beaters are nowadays not so easy to find, and when they can be found are often expensive.

In the wide, open spaces of downland partridge country, for instance, you need a strong beating team to cover the ground efficiently, and at a pound a head per day, even with boys at half that rate, they form quite an expensive item. Nor is there any point in being too thrifty in this respect, for too few beaters mean game walked over or the inability to prevent birds from flying out of the drive on the flanks.

Not any Tom, Dick or Harry will make a good beater, for there is more to the job than a wearisome foot slogging, stick swinging plod across country interspersed with half-hearted cries of "*Ay-ay-ay.*" A tip at the end of the day is, of course, an incentive, and richly deserved, but few beaters nowadays turn out merely for the sake of this. Most of them look forward to the day's sport as much as the guns do, and it is up to the guns not to let them down. There are few sights more disheartening to the beaters, after they have carried out a complicated and roundabout manoeuvre, than to see all the birds so carefully put over the guns, going on saluted but unscathed.

To beat his best a man must know exactly what he has got to do at each drive and why, and it is the keeper's job to explain this to him. It is also obviously in the keeper's interest to do this as if the drive goes wrong due to a lack of orders or a misunderstanding, he is the one who will be held responsible. At the same time, beaters must realise that they are under the command of the keeper and that what he says goes. Too much loud-mouthed regimentation is unnecessary; the tactful keeper who commands respect will get the best out of his beating team. His orders must be obeyed promptly and without question for he is concerned not only with putting birds into the bag, but also with keeping wayward beaters out of it.

Not So Loud

Although many beaters, especially the younger ones, seem to think otherwise, there is no need for too much noise. There is not so much temptation to shout when walking across open stubble or plough, but as soon as a covert is entered the tendency is for the line to give tongue like a bitch pack, all the while flailing the tree trunks with their sticks. As a result pheasants, instead of scuttling forward to rise and flush steadily at the edge of the wood, not unduly alarmed by the steady tapping of sticks and other little noises of an experienced line, burst from the wood in a single explosion, terrified by the sudden crescendo, and the drive is over almost before it has begun.

In covert the advance must be slow, steady and relentless, and every bush or patch of cover, however thick and brambly, must be thoroughly poked out on the way. It is useless going round the thick places; as far as possible the beaters must go through them. Often the thickets are avoided through laziness, but sometimes because the beater concerned is afraid of being left behind, a particularly unpleasant experience if there happens to be a walking gun or two with the line. The rate of advance must be governed by the slowest mover and the density of the cover. If one beater comes up against a particularly impenetrable patch which needs to be beaten out and then by-passed, the rest of the line must wait until he has finished and regained his position. It is when the line starts to straggle that accidents happen; besides which the woodland cannot be thoroughly beaten out and game will run back through the gaps.

However numerous and efficient the beaters may be, they have no answer to the birds which are determined to break back, get up just when the line has passed over them, or fly straight out over the side of the covert. To deal with these contingencies one or more guns may be detailed to walk with the beaters, but beaters' guns are a subject on their own which will have to wait till later.

The host discusses the next drive with the keeper and some of the drivers.

Mr. Oglanby (right) who had an amazing experience with a grouse.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

ALTHOUGH I have never had first-hand experience of serious pillaging by badgers, I do not doubt that they can occasionally be as much of a nuisance as foxes. In fact, several years ago a badger was caught in a henhouse among his dead victims in this county; and another case of pillaging by Brock was related to me by a shooting man last Sunday morning.

Apparently a friend of this man is a part-time, honorary gamekeeper, and he had been rearing a very small number of pheasants in a wire-netting enclosure. One morning he found a fearful mess. Some of the coops had been overturned, and both foster-mother hens and young birds were killed. The coops had also been badly chewed, as if an animal with powerful jaws had tried at first to tear his way into the inmates before he managed to get the coops upside down.

The following night this spare-time keeper waited up for the marauder. In the dark he heard a badger grunting around inside the enclosure; so he loosed his labrador at him. There was some scuffling, but the raider escaped, probably because he was more than a match for the dog. After this encounter all went well for a few nights, then the badger returned. This time he had not been able to overturn the one remaining coop, but it must have been open; for Brock had grabbed the hen by the neck, and dragged the coop along with the luckless bird all over the enclosure. A track in the grass showed the course of this one-sided tug of war.

When the badger came back for another session of fun, he was, however, not so fortunate. He walked into a box trap, which had been manufactured by the keeper, and that was the end of his activities. I have a photograph of this trap. It is of simple design but is so obviously a trap that only a badger with the blood lust, or with a keen hunger, would allow himself to be lured inside it. Much would depend, of course, on the kind of bait used, and I suspect that the best bait for a rogue badger would be illegal.

News from the Yorkshire Moors

Before the man who told me of this badger incident had finished his tale three strange fellows appeared on the path up to my abode. Two of them were dressed in plus fours, and they both had the appearance of shooters. In a few minutes I discovered that they were shooters. The third man had, I understand, provided the transport, and had little to say about shooting affairs. But the others had plenty of news from the Yorkshire moors where one of them is a keeper in the Brontë district. This keeper told me an astonishing story of the behaviour of a cock grouse on his own ground this year, which is worth reporting, although it has the air of something from the tales of the redoubtable Baron Münchhausen. I am prepared to believe this story nevertheless, because I once heard a similar account of a cock grouse which approached human invaders on his territory. However, I had better give details of Mr. Oglanby's experience.

Attacked by Cock Grouse

One day when he was returning along the moorland road on a motor-cycle combination to the lodge where he lives, he saw a cock grouse behaving strangely on the ground in front. He stopped his machine to avoid killing the bird, and was treated to an aggressive display, which suggested that the creature resented this intrusion on his chosen territory. The grouse drooped his wings, *kok-koked* for a few moments, then flew on to the keeper's right forearm, and climbed up on to his shoulder. Mr. Oglanby averted his face, just in case the lunatic bird might aim a blow at his nearest eye; but nothing of that sort happened.

On another occasion the same grouse made threatening advances towards his terrier, and might have been mauled, if the keeper had not restrained the excited dog. Finally, one of Mr. Oglanby's friends, who found some difficulty in accepting such an incredible story, went on the back of the motor-cycle to see for himself, and the grouse obliged with the original performance. He circled over the two men, dropped on the roadway, adopted an aggressive attitude, then flew up on to Mr. Oglanby's arm a second time. Not only did he do this, however, but he went round the back of the keeper's neck while the friend looked on dumfounded. It is well-known that hand-reared grouse will become exceedingly tame, and will even fly on to a person's head at times; but this one was wild bred. When he was acting in this fashion, he had already escaped two shoots this season.

The other shooting man who came with Mr. Oglanby to see me is a staunch believer in dogging. Like many another sportsman of his type, he would rather shoot a brace of grouse over his setters than ten brace from a butt. I tried to explain that a driven grouse makes a better shot than a flushed one; but he refused to change his views. I appreciate his attitude. He belongs to a small band of shooters who are really dog lovers at heart. But he could hardly deny that driving has improved the stocks on moors enormously during the last hundred years. Dogging, to be successful, needs a big acreage of rough holding cover. Unfortunately, cover of this sort has little feeding value, and grouse will not multiply significantly without plenty of suitable food.

Lord Walsingham's Grouse Drivers

Another piece of information from those Yorkshire visitors which interested me greatly was that two, if not three, of the grouse drivers used by Lord Walsingham are still alive. It was this famous sportsman who made the record shoot for one man of 1,070 grouse on Blubberhouses Moor on August 30, 1888. It is now 78 years since that remarkable feat was accomplished; so if the drivers were out that day, they must be old men.

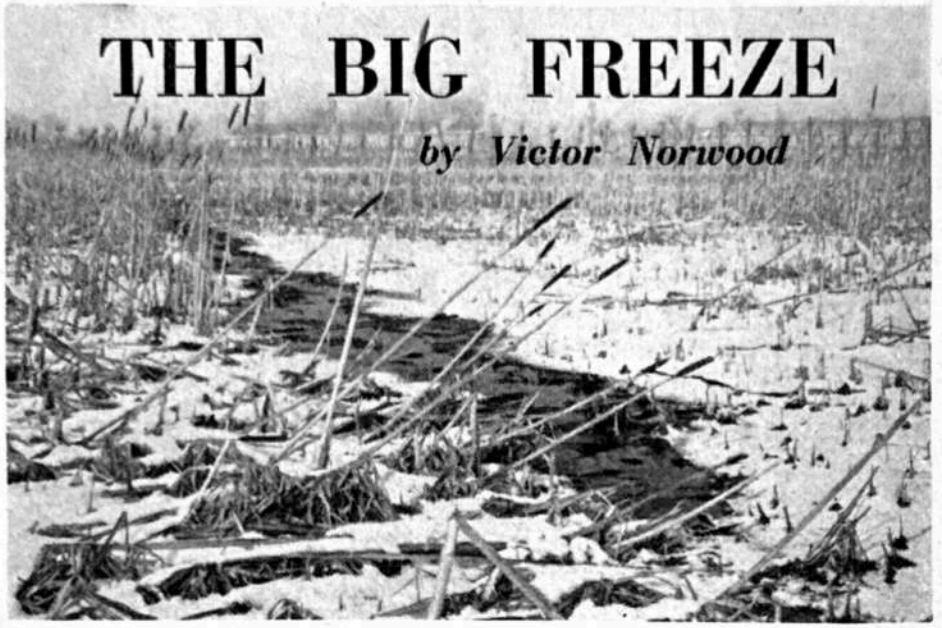
The first drive of this historic shoot started at 5.12 a.m., and the walk home ended at 7.30 p.m. Lord Walsingham fired about 1,550 cartridges, including 40 signal shots not fired at grouse, and 1,036 birds were brought in at night. The final total included 22 picked up the next day, and 12 found at a more orthodox shoot two days later. This record-breaking effort did not upset his lordship in the slightest. He fired 3¼drs. of black powder all day without suffering from a headache or an aching shoulder, and he played cards in the evening as usual. This bit of information has probably surprised many a grouse shooter since 1888; for in addition to the strain of killing two and one-third birds per minute during the actual shooting time of 20 drives, Lord Walsingham must have been keyed up to the highest pitch for a period of time equal to about three normal shooting days. From my own experience, I know that a headache is liable to develop after one has stared for a short day over a moor in August.

Although this is the record bag for one man who apparently set out to make a record, the greatest number of grouse ever killed in one day were bagged by eight guns in Lancashire. The total was 2,929 from six drives, which yielded, without the pick-up, 459, 629, 612, 284, 440 and 269 birds. Obviously the pick-up had been in keeping with the rest of this shoot. I make it 236; and it shows how important a pick-up can be. Some moorland keepers have told me occasionally that they never bother to have an organised pick-up on the day after a shoot, either because they have not the staff available, or because they imagine that the ground has been thoroughly searched after each drive; but I am quite certain that the ground is never properly searched on the day of a big grouse shoot. It is, of course, a different matter where a small bag is made. In circumstances of that sort no-one would be justified in sending two gillies and a keeper several miles over rough country for a brace or two; but the pick-up on the day following, say, a 200 brace shoot will pay the wages of two helpers and show a profit into the bargain.

When grouse have been coming thick and fast, and everyone's attention has been fully occupied with shooting, a certain number of birds that fall near a neighbour's butt are generally left behind, simply because they are too easy to pick; but the most fruitful places for the gleaner are a quarter of a mile on each side of the butts. It is there that hit grouse drop out of the coveys without being noticed by the shooters.

THE BIG FREEZE

by Victor Norwood



As usual, many countrymen are predicting a severe winter, mainly on account of that old myth that hedges loaded with berries " be a sure sign of it." And wildfowlers, of course, are praying for really hard weather. As a " first taste " of what they hope for, we are publishing this article about a past season.—EDITOR.

IT was 5 o'clock in the morning, and bitterly cold. The foreshore was a sheet of ice, and a biting wind whipped across the frozen hummocks and whined through the stark limbs of ghostly trees standing on either side of the narrow, uneven track. We were off on yet another dawn shoot, a trio of optimists — Jack " Mallard " Kirk, Colin " Longsight " Lilley, and myself.

Thin ice covering shallow pools along the saltings crunched underfoot as we left the path and made a detour behind thorn bushes, plodding through the gloom towards our favourite spot—a belt of tall reeds rooted deep in mud, usually soft and treacherous, but now frozen hard. As we trudged along we could hear geese talking in the distance.

We had, so far, experienced mediocre luck at this particular spot along the Humber. Formerly, we had always shot at Alkborough Flats, but last year a twenty mile stretch of the river between Whitten Ness and Brough was declared a wildfowl sanctuary, and as Alkborough was included, Winteringham became the only alternative foreshore within reasonable travelling distance.

The First Goose

I recall many happy hours spent on the Flats, and many humorous incidents. I particularly remember the first goose we three ever bagged, many years ago. It was late one keen November afternoon. A flight of some two-hundred pink-feet wedged in lower than usual and swung towards a stubble field, then, maddeningly, veered south as a fog-horn blared. Colin winged a straggler, which came down in a frozen fields about a hundred yards away. The goose was more shocked than hurt, and kept flying on for a few yards while we tried vainly to get close enough for a killing shot. In the excitement, I waded waist-deep through a flooded dyke as the goose finally soared aloft. I fired from my precarious position as it veered towards us, surprisingly, and saw feathers scatter, then Jack, using his ancient but well-tried single-barrel " Long Tom," brought the fugitive down like a stone at well over sixty yards. " Mallard " Kirk always takes his time over a shot, and in all the years I have known him I have seldom seen him miss with this long-barrelled 10-bore under normal conditions.

A lot of water has flowed along the Humber since that chill afternoon. We quickly discovered that Winteringham belonged largely to the teal. Rarely did we ever get a shot at wigeon or mallard, and although we saw and heard plenty of geese, they were invariably too far out over the water to afford any opportunity for shooting. After several unsuccessful expeditions we became resigned to the inevitable bag of a few teal. All in all it was our poorest season yet; but not the least eventful.

Really Tough Going

Winteringham was comparatively strange ground to us, and presented pitfalls in the form of thorn bushes, barbed-wire fences, deep dykes originally cut for drainage, but now overgrown with long grass and scrub, and cluttered with rank weed, and last but not least, huge bulwarks of rough stones stretching along the foreshore in great mounds as a barrier against high tides. It was, we discovered, difficult to move shorewards through the gloom without creating enough clatter to waken the dead, and there was the constant prospect of a broken ankle or a gashed knee.

This particular expedition was to provide highlights unique in our wildfowling experience. It was, according to the weather prophets, the coldest spell for sixteen years, but we defied the aftermath of the blizzard. Adversity dogged our steps from the start. Having surmounted sundry ice-bound wire strands and treacherous slopes, we turned towards the shoreline, but Jack, in the lead, had taken barely half-a-dozen strides into the crackling undergrowth when he managed to plant both his big feet in a drainage trench, and was instantly submerged to his hips. Luckily he was well rigged out in a waterproof, one-piece suit over his other clothing, and so escaped with wet feet.

We hauled him out and emptied his waders, and with much complaining he stumbled on ahead again. But his luck was out. He had not gone ten yards when he fell smack into another pit! This time he lost the upper plate of his over-large false teeth, and a frantic search ensued, during which the bulb in our torch decided to pack up. By some miracle Colin located the precious teeth sticking in a snow mound. " Mallard " Kirk's waders were emptied again, and we continued, to much profane comment from him and a good deal of loud squelching.

Performing heroic feats of mountaineering, we clambered over the slippery, snow-covered rocks and sorted ourselves out to wait for daylight. There was no moon, but the chill grey of dawn was not far away. The wind sighed eerily through the waving reeds and the rising tide lapped not far away. I seated myself on a gnarled stump that I had located on a previous occasion and had bedded in the mud. Once settled, I unloaded my gear and enjoyed a drink of hot Oxo and an early breakfast. Among the reeds we were out of the biting wind, but the cold struck up and soon my feet felt like lumps of ice in spite of two pairs of thick woollen socks. With every gust of wind ice and snow particles spattered my face and neck. I could hear Jack damning his wet waders and socks. I could imagine how he felt. Through the gloom I could just make him out. " Longsight " Lilley was hunkered down some twenty yards away in the other direction.

Foghorns, Sirens and Geese

I finished my snack — I caught a fragrant whiff of coffee as Jack uncorked his flask. Colin, I knew, would be enjoying his customary tot of rum. The light increased rapidly, and there seemed an unusual amount of steamship activity on the river, though I could not see any lights because of swirling mist. I put out two duck decoys about thirty yards from my position. Ordinarily we do not use decoys, but a friend had made me a Christmas present of half-a-dozen, and we decided to give them a trial. We waited, chilled, especially Jack, cramped, and restless, but encouraged by the repeated sounding of geese from the direction of Read's Island.

Fog-horns and ships' sirens were blaring constantly, and I thought it likely that some of the geese might fly our way when they did eventually move. The pale glimmer increased until I could see perhaps fifty yards across the frozen mud to where the water lapped. The geese were noisier. I loaded one chamber with Alphamax No. 5 shot (12-bore, three inch), and the other with triple-A. Much has been written about shot sizes and effect. Personally, for high-flying geese (and I have yet to see a really low-flying bird in this area) I prefer AAA to BB every time. I appreciate the argument that the larger the shot the less pattern coverage and the greater degree of shooting skill required, but I maintain that for a shooter who really knows his gun and what it is capable of, large shot are superior for geese—extra range, greater killing power, and far greater shock force.

A few teal winged along the fringe of the mud, driving like bullets into the mist. Presently, we heard airborne geese not far away, but could not see them. We could not yet see more than a hundred yards through the fog. The daylight encroached further. Curlew called along the water's edge, and duck, teal mostly, were skimming above the shallows well out of range. It seemed an eternity before the wind shifted and tore a gap in the mist. The sun gleamed dull red through the dark clouds banked along the horizon, and soon, as the flaming orb rose higher, the shredded vapour began to disperse until eventually we could see the bleak outline of Read's Island.

The bulk of the geese were still there. We could see only a few, but their combined clamouring denoted hundreds. Suddenly, from a point to my left, came a sound like a squalling cat with its tail in a rat-trap—Colin was trying out his newly-acquired goose-call. A murmuration of starlings drove past on whistling wings, alarming in their suddenness, skimmed

the reed tops. Out on the river a large steamer hooted dismally, and as if that was the awaited signal, numbers of geese began to lift from the island. It was maddening to watch them flapping up so completely beyond range.

As we watched them veering south-west, the unexpected happened. Somebody aboard the steamer fired a gun—three swift shots, then two more, obviously an automatic weapon. Instantly the flight wheeled and headed straight for where we three crouched. Unless they changed direction again they would pass directly overhead. It was the break we had long hoped for. They were about fifty yards up and flying fast, and creating a lot of noise. We waited tensely. I changed the No. 5 load in my left barrel for AAA.

A Fall of Geese

Suddenly, the lead gander swerved aside—he had seen us! The roar of Jack's 10-bore ended the suspense. The leader swapped ends, then began to fall, spinning slowly over and over until he struck a sheet of thin ice covering a wide pool, and plunged clean through. "Longsight" Lilley swung on to his choice, but slipped as he brought his gun up. I saw him fall even as I gave an eight-pounder a three-yard aim-off and brought it tumbling down with a swiftly-gauged left-barrel shot. I swung quickly on to another bird, but already the flight was sweeping higher, out of effective range. I fired, but even as I squeezed the trigger I knew it was futile.

Colin, floundering on the icy mud, swore angrily, then he suddenly flung up his 12-bore and shot a lone wigeon as it streaked from beyond the reeds and out towards the river. I had not seen it, nor had Jack. It was a wonderful instinctive shot, about the neatest kill I have ever seen.

"Mallard" Kirk was probing for his shot goose, kneeling on the hard mud and leaning far out over the shattered ice with his coat, pullover, and shirt sleeves rolled bulkily up to his elbows. The pool was deeper than he had supposed. My kill had fallen into the river, much to my chagrin, and already the turning tide was sweeping it away, and it seemed I was to lose the bird after all.

"Get after it!" Colin shouted, "the mud will bear you, and the water isn't more than a foot deep there. Hurry!"

Impulsively I took him at his word and started across the frozen mud. I splashed into the shallows and waded quickly towards the bobbing bird, but just as I was reaching out to grasp it I stepped off what must have been the original river bank and plunged into deep water! The icy shock took my breath away. I went completely under, and for a moment panic almost stopped my heart beating. Then I surfaced, and began to flounder desperately shorewards. I could not even cry out. I could feel the tug of the tide, yet I did not feel cold, only scared.

The feel of mud under my kicking feet reassured me, and I stood erect. The goose, the cause of it all, had been washed up on to solid mud by the wave created by my plunge. I grabbed the limp bird and struggled with it back to the reeds, and once I was clear of the water I began to feel the chill. The wind cut through me like a knife. Jack left off fishing for his goose with the forked stick he had dragged from a bush above highwater mark, and helped me off with my sodden gear while Colin, practical as always, began to gather bundles of reeds. He heaped them on the path beyond the stones, stuffed his newspaper under them, and struck sundry matches until smoke swirled and the paper flared. Soon flames were leaping. Colin piled broken sticks on the crackling reeds, creating more volumes of smoke, but the flames had a good hold, and by the time I was stripped the fire was blazing furiously, roaring in the wind.

I hopped up and down like an Abernackie Indian, blue with cold. I ran this way and that, feeling like a solid block of ice, numbed through. Eventually Jack got me to put his jacket on, and Colin gave me his duffle-coat. I squatted close to the fire, shivering, my teeth chattering, cursing geese, shooting, the water, the cold, and everything I could think of, until some of the awful chill began to leave my quivering limbs. Then I began to see the funny side of it, and with the rest of my hot Oxo inside me, things did not seem so grim. Presently I was able to laugh with Jack and Colin, and, as they pointed out, I had my goose.

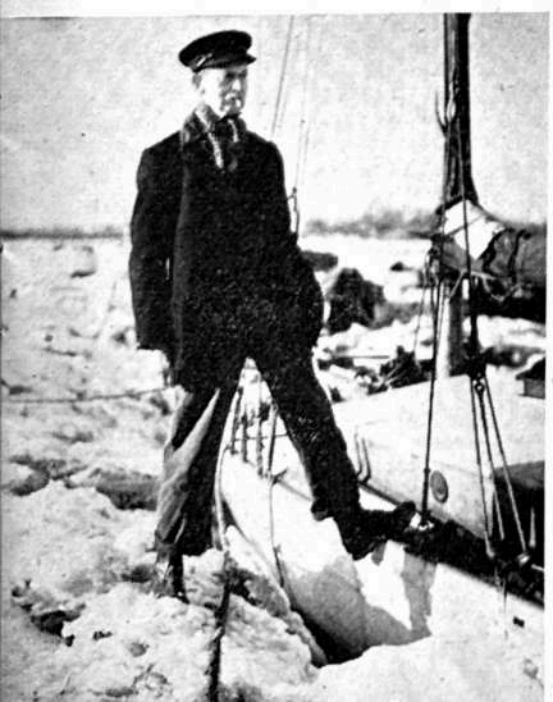
All the same, I hardly thought it worth the wetting. Fortunately, I had some extra clothes in the car, old rags I wore when doing odd jobs, and Jack went for these while I thawed out further. Finally, fully dressed once more, I helped to retrieve "Mallard's" goose, and we decided to call it a day. But more shocks were in store. As we crouched over the hole in the ice we heard a shot from close-by, so close that pellets whistled among the reeds behind us. We showed ourselves quickly, and saw a youth, 12-bore in hand, emerging from the reeds and walking briskly towards the pool where I had set our duck decoys. Now only one of them floated serenely among the weed tufts—the other was a shot-shattered ruin.

Yell of Wrath and Anguish

I realised what had happened even before the youth did, and I uttered a yell of wrath and mental anguish that so frightened him that he slipped and slithered along on his behind for a few yards. Recovering his balance and retrieving his gun with admirable deftness, he took one startled look at the shredded decoy, another swift glance at our wrathful faces, and then fled in the direction of the village, impervious to all hazards in his haste.

So much for the over-exuberance of youth, and the life-like qualities of our rubber mallard. There was nothing I could do about my wet boots, and I realised how Jack must have felt for the past two hours. I squelched along miserably, nor was my condition improved by the abrupt depositing of a wood pigeon's "calling-card" on the back of my neck. He paid for his temerity dearly; Jack gave him a quick shot at forty yards that reduced him to a whirling bundle of crumpled feathers. Teal were following the waterline at regular intervals, too far away for shooting and geese still lifted occasionally from Read's Island, but following their usual pattern they flew either north-west or south, and it was obvious that we were not going to get in another shot at them that day.

As we retraced our steps one resolve became firm, in my mind at least, that I would, before our next expedition, obtain a dog to do my retrieving. The wet clothing I was carrying was already frozen stiff, and my feet inside the wet boots conjured up visions of pneumonia. Oddly enough, though I am usually prone to head colds in winter, on this occasion not even a sniffle developed, nor did "Mallard" Kirk suffer any ill effects, which just goes to show how fickle are the fates that preside over mad Englishmen and wildfowlers.



Boats were frozen in at their moorings

FLY FANTASY

by David Blake

THE naming of more than 600 patterns of artificial flies has strained the invention of originators and fly-tyers to the utmost. Scores of flies prosaically take their names from those of their perpetrators; from the natural insects which they represent; from the colours of which they are composed; or from the birds from which their feathers come. That still leaves a few scores whose names are as artificial as they are themselves.

Literature occupies a strong position, though its application is perhaps a little forced at times. The Marryat of the fly was brother to the Marryat of "Mr. Midshipman Easy." Le Fanu needs no comment. If "Lov's Lure" is not a title by a romantic novelist it ought to be; and Pope's Fancy and Watson's Fancy respectively conjure up memories of Pindaric odes and 221A Baker Street. Peveril o' Peak takes one to Scott; the Artful Dodger and Bumble are both in "Oliver Twist"; while the Bottle Imp comes straight from Stevenson and the Gold Bug from Poe. What Katy Did (at school and elsewhere) joins Goldilocks in the juvenile section. No comment upon Smut is presumably permissible in this section.

Apart from real names of origin, such as Canada and Punjab, the choice of places is poor, offering only the Abbey, the Academy, the Sanctuary, and—if it can be called a place—the Coffin. Among those flies that do not fall into any particular category is Gilbey's Extractor, a fly that could surely as well have been called the Corkscrew.

Flights of Fact and Fancy

Men are mentioned in plenty, but for the most part they are merely the names of inventors. It is to women that fly-namers have turned for their greatest flights of fact and fancy.

There are straightforward names such as Alexandra, Sally, Dorothy, Jennie, Kate and Jessie; real ones like Ethel May and Jenny Lind; and romantic ones like our lady Greensleeves. Beauty and Charm are feminine attributes but not the only ones, and the Female Beaverkill sounds more dangerous than the male.

One is tempted to pair some of the more exotic ladies with less exciting male partners—the Cardinal with the Parachene Belle, for example, or the Quaker with the Mormon Girl—the Crown Prince with the Witch (fairy tale stuff, this)—the Admiral with the Pink Lady—and the Professor with Hairy Mary—but all this gets a little too close to the Saint and his chatter about what the Actress said to the Bishop. Dare one end this section with an unelaborated reference to the Wren's Tail?

SPEAR FISHERMAN

Killer or Sportsman?

by F. Hawes

"FIND out what they are doing and stop them." Again we hear the old puritanical cry; condemning the actions of others from ignorance. This time it is the new sport of spear fishing which is being damned by people who have not bothered to find out the facts.

An investigation was recently conducted by the Chief Inspector of Fisheries into the sport of spear fishing, in response to a request by the Devon Sea Fisheries Board, who wanted to introduce a bye-law to prohibit the sport. After an exhaustive enquiry it was decided that such an action was unnecessary. The Cornwall authorities agreed with this decision. This is significant because it is along the coasts of these two counties that the sport is practised most.

What, then, are the facts?

Spear fishing is a new pastime and must be assessed as it practised in Britain and not elsewhere.

Most publicity and reports on spear fishing have come from the Mediterranean, which is a tide-less sea in which the common species of fish are not migratory in their way of life. They may make journeys to mate, but for most of the time they live within a well-defined area. This behaviour is characteristic of the fish of warmer seas; in his book "Under the Red Sea" Hans Hass gives many instances of fish having particular lairs to which they continually return. This is an important point, because it means that once a mature animal is killed a gap is left for a time in the population of an area. If many are killed the breeding population is soon reduced to numbers too small to allow the survivors any certainty of finding a mate during the breeding season. Such fish are also usually slow moving and reluctant to leave their "home territory." They can be killed easily when hiding in crevices. In Cousteau's book "The Silent World" there is a photograph of one of these fish—a grouper—about to be knifed.

It is not difficult to imagine what happened to these sedentary fish once hunting with spears became a "sportsman's" pastime on the Continent. Eventually the fishermen protested and fishing with an aqua-lung and certain types of spear guns were banned. The "sportsmen" who once boastfully hunted for large animals now are content to take the smaller fish—poking their guns under the rocks to shoot at point-blank range—as one of the French films on the subject shows them doing.

The fact that big fish were available received much publicity, which was aimed to boost the tourist trade. Records of numbers and weights of fish killed attracted more hunters to an area to the benefit of the local tradesfolk. Also some beautiful underwater colour films of the fish of these regions have brought the sea and its denizens to the notice of the British public. Too many people immediately transfer the image of the slaughter of these slow-moving creatures to our waters and, with honest intent and commendable sentiment, they say, "This must not happen here."

But is this picture true of Britain?

Several Difficulties

First, it is important to realise that our coastal waters are tidal, so swimming in them presents its own difficulties. Also, because of the action of the winds on the tidal ebb and flow, stirring up sediment, they are frequently turbid, so visibility is not good. This explains why there has not so far been an underwater film made in these waters. Furthermore, they are cold and only during a few months each year will the fit and hardy be prepared to stay in long enough to search for fish, so that the fishing effort made by fewer hunters will be considerably less than that made in the Mediterranean.

Secondly, the fish they hunt—the game fish—are mainly bass, grey mullet, pollock and conger. Skates and flat fish are also taken for the pot.

All the game fish migrate at some time during the year, either to or from these shores to breed. Bass and mullet frequently move in shoals up and down the coast. Pollock and conger do not move so much, but are not sedentary, though they often remain within an area of rocks. All are fast swimming and have to move offshore on an ebb tide. They are almost constantly on the move.

Since they are migratory, at various times they have to be able to combat the attacks of other animals, such as gulls, seals, dolphins and larger fish. They have, as a result, an acute sense of danger and disappear when frightened.

These fish have to be stalked very carefully by an able and patient swimmer. All the time the fish will be aware of the presence of the hunter. One false action, a splash or quick movement, will frighten it away. It does not have to move far to be out of sight. Visibility seldom extends to more than twenty feet horizontally and frequently much less. It is further protected by the cold water restricting the time the hunter can spend in the sea. Rubber suits can be worn, but they tend to restrict movement and so tire the swimmer quickly, nor do they provide protection indefinitely. Woollen jumpers, long underwear and gloves are frequently worn to extend swimming time.

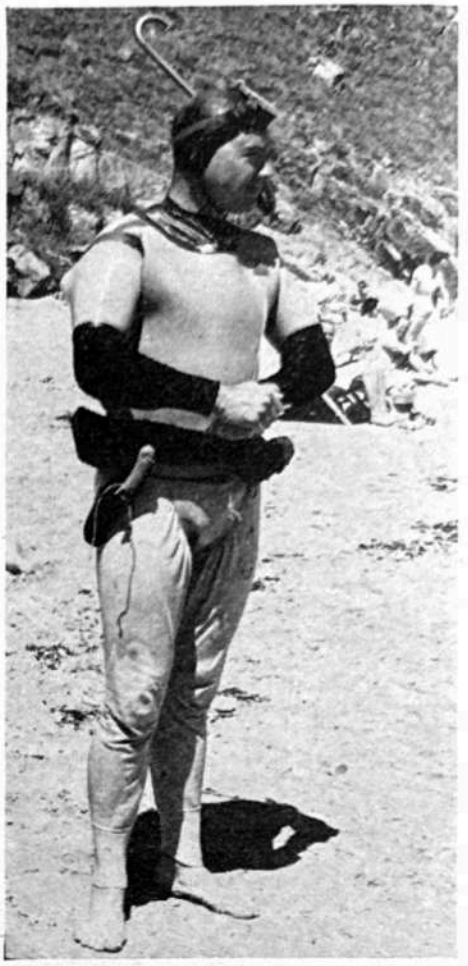
Skate and flat fish can often be seen clearly on the bottom and could be killed in large numbers if they occurred in large numbers during the summer months. They do not, as any angler or professional fisherman can confirm.

Very Small Bags

The spear fishermen report that so far this year they have hunted for some forty-two hours each from June to August. One, with several years' experience, has obtained eighteen mullet and place, the other, a comparative beginner, has landed five fish of the same species. The hours of effort put in by these two is a measure of their enthusiasm and is exceptionally high. Week-end hunters seldom put in more than one or two hours at a time. This year, because of the cold weather and turbid waters, their hunting time and kills will be proportionately less. Only the most determined anglers would fish for such small bags.

One type of fish that has not been mentioned is the wrasse. They are not migratory. They are also insatiably curious, but their flesh is inedible. They are not, therefore, a prize for any sportsman, though they are killed occasionally by ignorant beginners. Otherwise, their numbers are kept in check by fishermen who use their flesh for bait and by anglers. The latter, when asked why they bother to catch them, usually reply "For the cat."

It would be as well to consider what regulations exist or can be created to prevent excessive numbers of fish being taken from the sea by anglers or spear fishermen. Any competitions and prizes for numbers and weights of catch might be discouraged. A legal restriction on this would be resisted by anglers as it would affect them most, because they frequently run such competitions — however, they do not consider themselves killers.



The author in sub-aqua rig.

Forbidden already by the British Sub-Aqua Club is the use of an aqua-lung. It was thought that this breathing equipment would put the fish at a disadvantage, because the hunter could remain submerged whilst stalking instead of having to return to the surface continually for air or of having to do his stalking on the surface where he can be easily seen by fish. Many other spear fishermen, not members of the Club, have abandoned the use of the aqua-lung because it is cumbersome and refills of air are too expensive. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether it confers any advantage on the swimmer because the trail of exhaust bubbles rumbling to the surface frightens fish away.

Any comparison of methods will show that a spear in the hands of a sportsman is a highly selective way of catching fish. Spear fishermen select their fish. Neither nets nor lines in anyone's hands can be considered so selective and must result in a higher incidence of unwanted killing. All methods result in wounding. A fish that breaks out of a net is frequently damaged. One that breaks the trace of a line or tears off a hook will often have a mouth so injured that it will not be able to feed. Both may eventually die as the result of these experiences. No one will intentionally wound an animal for enjoyment. Some fish will be wounded and will die irrespective of the method by which they are injured. The fish on a spear will be killed by the hunter with his knife as soon as possible; death will be quicker than being dragged up in a net or on the end of a line, fighting for life. Unintentional hurt is the unpleasant result of many sports, which all must try to avoid.

There is, however, no valid reason to prohibit a sport on these grounds alone or wildfowling

(Continued on page 655, col. 2)

Fisherman's Diary

THE pike fishing season opened on June 16 so far as statutory law is concerned, and many hundreds of pike have been caught in the intervening months. One or two River Boards and a great number of angling clubs and associations prohibit pike fishing until October 1, and thousands of anglers who are not restricted by actual laws obey a self-imposed rule not to fish for pike until September is out.

This actual or personal extension of the pike's close season is of relatively recent origin and arose from a variety of causes. It is argued that pike are in poor condition in the summer months, and hardly worth fishing for. Certainly some individual pike take a long time to recover from spawning, but I have in the past caught many that were full of fight. Much must depend upon environment.

On a great many waters spinning is impossible while the weed growth is luxuriant, for a chain of circumstances fixes the position of pike. The weed harbours an infinity of arthropods sought out by most species of coarse fish, and the latter haunt the weeds. There, too, will be the pike, mainly because their natural prey can be found in quantity, but also because the weed provides cover for the ambushes which pike, not over-energetic fish, like to set in order to secure a meal with a minimum of roaming and high-speed attack.

It is a good time for live-baiting or using a floating plug, but spinning must wait for winter. Everything is then in the angler's favour, for weed has died down, the pike seek out their food and move about a good deal, and the exercise of spinning helps to keep the angler's blood circulating when he might well freeze if he sat and watched a float.

That recent innovation, the dead herring as bait, can be used at any time, but it is likely to be more successful in winter, for the main cause of a herring's attraction is scent, and that is likely to have more effect when pike are actively seeking food than when they lie in waiting.

To many thousands of anglers next Monday is as important as it is to the shooting man.

Savageness of Sharks

A short time ago I quoted some opinions on the "man-eating" qualities of mako sharks. They were all well-qualified with "mays," "mights" and "perhaps," and it seems that there is no definite instance of a mako attacking a man.

I have just read "Moana," by Bernard Gorsky, published earlier this year by Elek Books. The author is one of four expert and experienced French skin and aqualung divers who are sailing the "Moana" around the world, photographing and spearing fish as they go. This volume covers the journey (it is almost as appropriate to say sea bed) from France to Tahiti. Writing in Panama Bay the author said: "One can also see marlins, flying fish, and mako sharks. Dangerous? No. We were told that they come in to pick up harpooned fish, but did not attack men. For instance, Cavanaggio once found himself surrounded by eleven of them at Tabogiulla Isle, but nothing happened."

I think I have read most of the serious underwater literature so far published and a fair proportion of the fiction. In the former, sharks are played down a good deal, and the layman is apt to get the impression that all sharks can be frightened off. Undoubtedly there is a vast difference between the armed diver, confident in himself, and the unfortunate man who is struggling at the surface in shark-ridden waters, but even the most nonchalant of divers quickly gets away from an area where the blood of a wounded fish is likely to attract sharks.

Makos, by the above reckoning, are presumably harmless. The blue shark is less so, and, of course, such killers as tiger and white-pointer sharks are, in their normal habitat, determined killers. Several unarmed underwater swimmers have survived encounters with them, just as unarmed people on land have survived encounters with lions, tigers and other killers. But there have been casualties. Much, in either element, must depend on the mood of the animal, when it last fed, and the deportment of the man.

A Rule for Sharks

It is something of a change to read what the author quoted above says after an approach (to within harpoon distance—he pricked it on the snout) by a shark of unidentified species in the Galapagos Islands. "I would say that in the bearing of that shark there was something precise and controlled which, though not yet an attack, *was on the point of becoming one*. However, the principal practical issue for me was that nothing had come of it, except—*yes, this was important:* recognition of a rigid rule, a rule to be observed—*that whenever one saw a large shark which seemed either irritable or deliberate, the thing to do was—get out of the water.*" The italics are the author's, and he is not given to italics.

Getting back to the blue and mako sharks found in British waters, there is the consoling fact that it is in the warm waters of tropical latitudes that these and other species reach the heights of aggressiveness. Their vitality seems greater and they are liable to attack almost anything on sight. Mako and blue sharks in the cooler waters of the Channel and the Irish Sea apparently adopt the more deliberate and less instantly aggressive characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon.

Preserving Tackle

For many people this weekend will be the last chance of trout fishing. When everything is tidied up and results from many areas are published, it may be possible to assess the season.

Ever since the first angling paper appeared (and one or two such periodicals lived and died before the earliest survivor was born) the end of a season, game or coarse, is usually the occasion for articles on the preservation of tackle during the time it remains idle in the cupboard.

I must confess to carelessness over tackle. Many people I know are far worse than I am in this respect, but the majority of my angling friends and acquaintances are on pinnacles of moral and technical rectitude. The latter will do all the necessary things to rods, reels and lines and this note is not for them.

To those in the former category I suggest only that they should take a dressed line off its reel, coil it in wide coils, and hang it up or lay it down.

If this were a B.B.C. talk or an angling article on tackle maintenance, it might rightly be followed by innumerable protests—what about this, that, the other . . . It isn't. I write for lazy people. At least summon up two minutes time and sufficient energy to take your line off the reel. That is the only thing that can go seriously and expensively wrong.

Horse Tail

Coincidence in reading! I had just read, in O. H. Mackenzie's "A Hundred Years in the Highlands," that "trout lines were made of white or other horsehair, and when one stabled a pony at an inn, it always ran the risk of having its tail stolen." I put down the book, picked up my Sunday paper, and read that Winston, the police horse ridden by the Queen at the Trooping of the Colour, is becoming bald in the tail because youthful visitors to the police stables value his tail hairs—though not for trout lines.

CORIDON.

GUN GOSSIP

by North Country

SOME of us possess what is known as a "good eye." Others just are not endowed with such a blessing and I doubt if it can be acquired. What has led me to this train of thought was a television act in which was shown a man throwing knives all round a girl on a rotating circle. He threw with unerring accuracy—perilously near his apparently nerveless assistant, but never too near. It was a brilliant display of exceptional merit which could only have been accomplished by a man with a good eye.

In making forward allowances and generally in shooting at moving targets it is necessary to have a good eye. If you ask an expert shot how he does it—how he makes the correct allowance for different birds at different ranges, etc.—he will, as likely as not, make some rather vague reply. The fact is he just does not know the secret of his success. And if he did, he would scarcely be able to explain it. But he will be sure to have a good eye, fine judgment and iron control. Without those aids he would not make his grade. What an advantage it is to possess natural skill—which can be improved and developed.

On the other side there is the faithful, conscientious plodder—to whom all praise is due. He keeps on, undeterred by failure and never allows himself to become discouraged. Practice helps him—as it helps everybody. But no amount of practice will ever convert him into a good shot—let alone an expert one.

A few weeks ago the question of old cartridges cropped up in this column. Readers may be interested to know that I have just had some cartridges, which I bought before the war, tested. They had the ordinary rolled turn-over and were loaded with our old friend Smokeless Diamond. Well, results were entirely satisfactory—both patterns and velocities being well up to standard. The cases had the deep brass heads and wadding was best white felt. As far as I know those cartridges have always been kept under dry conditions. But owing to a good many moves I cannot be quite definite on this point. While you never know and every precaution should be taken, it has been my experience that a good quality cartridge will stand up to a fair measure of harsh treatment. I once shot with some cartridges which had been round the world and subjected to every extreme of climate and weather and found them in first class condition. They were a high quality brand and well loaded.

The point, I think, about the use of non-fresh cartridges is the feeling of uncertainty. In this respect perhaps I enjoy some advantage in that I do not worry. I just shoot away and all seems to work out satisfactorily. At times I am tempted to stage some kind of rough and ready test of my own (if in doubt). But I am usually aware when the fault lies with me. And let me confess—it usually does!

In periods of bad shooting—such as we all go through—I do not find myself missing *everything* (not hitting a feather sort of thing). When I shoot badly, I miss many good birds, just killing one here and there. And it takes me *some time* to recover. On the other hand my more brilliant friends seem, on their off days, to miss everything. But they recover their form quickly and then shoot as well as ever. I have known a friend to miss nearly every bird during the morning and to kill nearly every bird during the afternoon. Rapid recovery on this scale has its merits on a big day when much game is on wing. It allows you a chance to retrieve a situation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters and photographs are invited for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published. Correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. 'Phone: HYDe Park 2556/2557.

BLACKGAME

Sir, — The recent article (issue August 17) on blackgame was interesting, but I wonder how many people know that though the season for these birds opens on August 20, there is an exception in respect of the New Forest, Somerset, and Devon, where it opens on September 1? Is there a story behind this distinction? Some good judges hold that it would be best for blackgame if they were "closed" everywhere till October 1.

It must now be fifty years since the New Forest had any breeding blackgame, but the birds still nest in parts of West Somerset and Devon, and have even shown slight local increases in recent years.

At Molland, which is about two miles inside the north Devon border, there is this interesting inn sign, a new one painted to replace an old Blackcock sign within the last six years.

On Exmoor, blackcock and greyhens are always known as "heath poults" or simply "poults."

J.D.W.,
Somerset.

A 1956 SCENE

Sir,—The following cornfield incident will, I am certain, interest readers. We were cutting a field of wheat the other day with reaper and binder. Everything had been going well, the last few square yards stood defiantly in the centre of the field and the binder turned sharply for the final swoop.

Suddenly, we heard a frantic "Whoa!" from the binder rider, who at once leapt off and ran back along the corn, accompanied by the tractor driver. "Pity," we said, "they looked like finishing it without trouble. Perhaps they have only dropped a spanner."

We were stooking up on the outside of the field and too far to see what the two men in the centre were doing, except that they were bending down and behaving rather peculiarly, making no effort to get back to their job. Presently, both walked slowly away, the one carrying something in his arms apparently with great care. What were they doing? We saw them again stoop down, fiddle about in the grass and gently place something on the edge of the field.

Presently we reached the spot on our round of stooking and went over to see what all the mystery was about. There, tucked up in a soft, grassy nest protected by several pieces of branch, was a rabbit. We spoke to the men who had now finished and come over to us. They thought it would be all right, though it had got a nasty bump. George would have a look at it later on to see how it had recovered.

To a man who has seen thousands of rabbits kicked, chased with pitch forks, slammed with heavy tractor spanners, run over, shot at point-blank range, and killed ruthlessly by any means available by almost anyone present, this 1956 scene was indeed touching to say the least.

The writer as well as the tractor men are old hands at this cornfield business. All of us have slain our thousand rabbits one way and another, but today there is an armistice. We turn our attentions to the woodpigeon when we want to shoot. The rabbit is returning to favoured places in Berkshire, as elsewhere in the country. Perhaps I had better say no more.

DOUGLAS ENGLAND,
Wokingham, Berks.

AN UNUSUAL PHOTOGRAPH

Sir,—As a lover of dogs and the owner of F.T. Ch. Treunair Cala whose photograph has been published by you, I am writing to register my horror of the photograph published by you with a letter "An Unusual Photograph." Not only is the photograph most unpleasant, but when I read that the dog's owner delayed going to his assistance in order to take it, I fail to understand how either he or you should want to put on record such a disgraceful episode.

I feel sure I am only voicing the opinion of many of your regular readers.

E. T. LUMSDEN,
Nutley, Sussex.

Sir, — Reference the photograph printed by you of two leopards attacking a dog. I feel, as must countless others, that if the photographer had devoted more time to scaring off the leopards instead of producing such a gruesome subject, the faithful hound might have been spared.

It is interesting to know the leopards were later shot over a goat, but why not another "Unusual Photograph?"

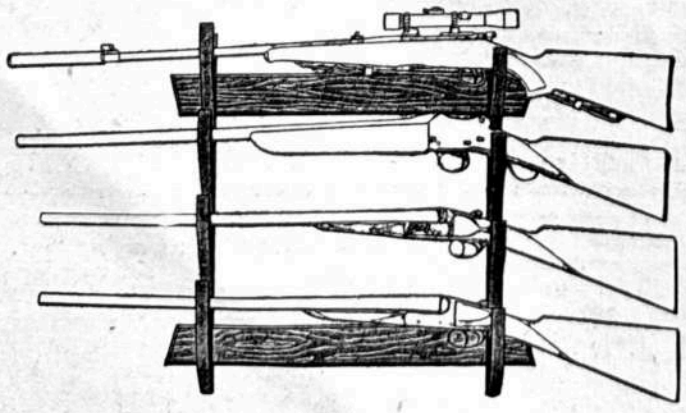
A. W. L. FRANKLIN (MRS.),
Goudhurst, Kent.

[As we expected, our post-bag contained several letters from dog-lovers deprecating the quite horrific photograph which we published for its unusual interest. While being dog men ourselves, we appreciate the susceptible feelings of those who have been "hurt" by the photograph, but we would point out this fact. That during the past few months alone we have seen such photographs in the daily Press, and in periodicals, as a "bird-man" plunging to earth to a violent death; a suicide leaping from the Clifton suspension bridge; women amid the smoke and flames of houses on fire who either fell back among the flames, or jumped to their death; pilots killed in air crashes. It would seem, then, that the reading public, who, we learn, seldom protest about the photographic recording of such events are more concerned with the sorry death of a dog than with that of one or more of their own kind. After all, an unpleasant photograph need be no more than glanced at. Those who have protested at this particular one should remember that, though the Britisher (and not every Britisher at that) has for long shown a great sentiment towards dogs, members of other nations may not take this view, or not to the extent that does the Britisher. The pie-dog is not regarded in many countries with love and devotion! We neither defend nor condemn the photographer of the leopard-dog picture, for we do not know the full circumstances of the case. But a man who was waiting to "snap" any wild animal coming to the water-hole may not have wasted much time in pressing the button, and the fact that he was brave enough to drive off the leopards and nearly saved the life of his dog surely is to his credit. We do not know his views on dogs; we do not know his views on the possible retaliation of leopards disturbed at their kill. We do know, however, that this was a most unusual photograph, and does not necessarily infer that the photographer was a black-hearted fellow and a coward. This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.]

A new sign painted to replace the old Blackcock one. (See letter, "Blackgame.")

SHOOTING EXCHANGE

Sir,—I am anxious to obtain a few days' driven grouse shooting in return for which I can offer some big game



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shooting in Sweden. In addition, I am, of course, prepared to pay for my sport.

I shall be pleased to hear from any reader who is interested in this proposition.

GUNNAR F. LUNDGREN,
c/o J. Wheater (Gunmakers) Ltd.,
265 Aulaby Road, Hull.

MYXOMATOSIS, ETC.

Sir,—Having just read "Tower-Bird's," article "August Jottings" (issue August 24) in which he states that he has not heard of any cases of myxomatosis in England this year. I regret that I must damp his feeling of pleasure, as I myself saw a rabbit in a very advanced stage of the disease only a few weeks ago—the first or second week in July. It was on the road-side between Scarborough and Whitby, near the little village of Sneaton, North Yorks.

Even so, it is very noticeable how the rabbit is coming back, here in the East Riding of Yorkshire. I, like "Tower-Bird," know of several places where you can count well over the twenties in a very small area, and that is in places where they, to most of us, appeared to have been completely wiped out.

But there is one thing which seems strange to me—they appear to be coming back quicker in areas where they were "thinest" populated before the scourge, and I wondered if any other reader has noticed this and could give any reason for it?

One dale which I have kept under close observation all through this summer appears still to be clear of any rabbits at all, even though it is two years this autumn since it was ravaged by the disease, and this was a place where they could be seen in hundreds on any summer's day.

It has been a bad time for game birds round this district. I see quite a few pairs of old partridges with no young, but have also seen one or two nice coveys and these are really strong birds which makes me think the first nests to hatch got away before the really bad weather started. Thus things may not be so bad as we think, and I do not think anyone can really say what the prospects are until all the corn is cut.

As for pheasants, seven nests which I kept under observation hatched very badly, and I think this may have been due to some very keen late frosts we had, as many eggs were "rotten," only very odd ones clear. This statement may also encourage the views of other readers.

H. W. DEAN,
Driffield, E. Yorks.

POODLES AS GUNDOGS

Sir,—As a reader of your journal for many years I have waited to see if anyone else had experienced the joy of shooting over a large poodle, but so far with no results. Enclosed is a snapshot of Amber—known to many of your readers.

She is an old lady now, over 12, and never really recovered from a most serious operation last year. Only today the blow has fallen. Her "doctor" says no more shooting days—perhaps just a ½-hour in the morning and again in the afternoon. How do I explain that to a bitch who grumbles in her stomach whilst we are snatching an hour for lunch?

Six mornings in the week I drag her from her bed. The night she sees the gun and clobber laid out she sleeps with one eye open and is scratching on the door at 6 in the morning. From now on it means everything being hidden in the car so she will not know, but where do I hide the bag when I return in the evening?

It is always sad to grow too old to carry out what we desire and how much more so when we cannot understand why.

Anyway, she has justified the claim that poodles are hunting dogs and not the lap-dogs people think.

There will never be another Amber.

C. F. MORRIS,
Wimbledon.

[Some years ago "Tower-Bird" related how his father shot over poodles for many years (large brown ones), and how he himself was brought up to shoot over them. He also mentioned other Essex sportsmen who regularly used them in the shooting field. We sympathise with you and Amber over the "doctor's" verdict—but alas the span of a dog's working life, indeed of its whole life, is all too short.—Ed.]

There will never be another Amber.

PROPOSED MERSEY WILDFOWLERS' CLUB

Sir,—It is proposed to hold a meeting at the Stork Hotel, Liverpool, at 7.30 on the evening of Wednesday, October 17, to explore the possibilities of starting a Wildfowlers' Club to cover the greater Liverpool area. For this meeting, Mr. W. L. J. Brockbank (treasurer of W.A.G.B.I.) has agreed to take the chair.

Any further details from Colonel J. G. Fink, Deep Dene, Rose Lane, Mossley Hill, Liverpool, 18 (phone: Allerton 1878), or from the writer of this letter.

J. B. BROUGH.

P.R.O., The Dee Wildfowlers' Club, 48 Greenleas Road, Wallasey, Cheshire.

PARTRIDGE CARRYING YOUNG

Sir,—I am well aware that you have put a stop to the correspondence concerning the carrying of young by woodcock, but I am sending you an extract from a letter published in the September issue of *The Gamekeeper*.

P. WORTH,
Goring, Oxon.

[Thank you for the cutting printed below.—Ed.]

A friend of mine is a keen fisherman. He and his wife were on the bank of the River Witham. Two partridges kept flying backwards and forwards over the river and my friend was able to see that one bird was each time carrying a young partridge (on one occasion she dropped one in the river, five yards from the bank, and went down and retrieved it). Only one bird carried the young ones, but both birds crossed each time the operation took place. One side of the river was mown grass, the other had been grazed down. The observer of this incident was Mr. Ormsby, of Bucknell, Lincoln.—P. J. Goulsbra, Lincoln.

KING GEORGE V's GUNS

Sir,—In reply to Mr. C. F. Miles's letter on the above subject, my description of the guns used is the correct one. King George V shot on twenty-two occasions as the guest of Lord Iveagh at Elveden, and he used the same three guns with side levers.

F. H. CLOUDSDALE,
Clappersgate, Ambleside.

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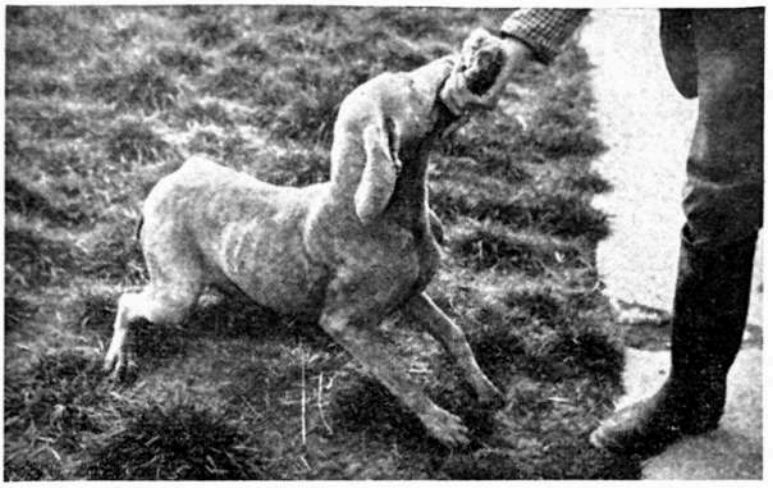
Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

THIS week I intend to discuss fully an interesting letter which comes from "Northerner" (Morpeth), and raises so many important points and appears to me to be of such general interest to gundog men that I reproduce it in its entirety below, and give my comments and suggestions upon the points that he raises.

"As a very old subscriber to *The Shooting Times*," writes Northerner, "I am always interested in your articles, and it occurred to me to write to you in regard to my young black labrador dog. The dog is just over a year old, on the small size, and from a long line of workers. I got him at about seven months. I knew he was of a nervous disposition, and did not object to this but was disappointed to find he was only the second gun-shy dog I have ever had. In this respect I always start in the same way by firing caps at a considerable distance and gradually getting nearer. Now, as a result of the expenditure of about 200 bulleted breach caps he has practically got over it.

"In the past we were surrounded by thousands of rabbits, but they have all disappeared and I have had to train him more than I like with a dummy—a piece of thick radiator hose. I do this largely in thick old heather and bracken, and up, down, or cross wind never once has he failed to find it. He has really a most wonderful nose. There is one problem in this connection and that is his reluctance to give it up at the command 'Give' and being very careful never to pull it I always have to press his lips against a tooth. I am persevering with this but I did wonder if you had any suggestions.



The hanger-on. A Weimarer bitch reluctant to "give" the dummy.

Tried on Dead Game

"Last week for the first time I tried him on game—a dead half-grown pheasant thrown into undergrowth which he nosed out quickly and brought to hand, but as usual I had to press his lip to make him give it up. So far all he knew about game was that whenever he was out with me in the car and I saw pheasants, partridges or a very rare rabbit on the road I stopped and let him nose out the scent although he never saw them. He gets any amount of exercise as I take him out in the car on our quiet country roads, put him out and give him a really good run flat out, and I have gradually increased the distances. He gets meat about six days in the week and is tremendously fit and full of energy: so much so that when he is ordered to 'Seek' he dashes about at express speed instead of nosing things out quietly. As he gets older I suppose this will right itself.

"I have been very strict with his training never overlooking a fault and he is most obedient. I can drop him close to me, or when he is out running, at 100 yards; go out of sight for several minutes and find he has not moved, so you will see he is very obedient. Unfortunately all his obedience goes by the board if he sees another dog to which he immediately rushes. I suppose this is because he never normally sees another dog so I now take him with me on a leash when I go into our nearest market town to gain experience.

"No doubt you found difficulties in teaching dogs to go in a certain direction. If you stretch out your arm they just keep looking at it and I don't know whether you have tried my plan. I have a fairly large area of ground, some of it pretty rough, and I started by hiding his dish at meal times in various places where it was out of sight and then pointing. Gradually he got to know what was meant.

"Another trouble I had with him, a common one with puppies, and that was his gnawing the woodwork of his kennel. Scolding did no good and eventually I cured him by painting all the woodwork with Renardine which stopped that.

"For the last 45 years I have trained my own gundogs and can honestly say I get as much pleasure watching the work of a dog I have trained myself as I do from actual shooting. I have had setters, labs, black and yellow, and spaniels, sometimes as many as three at a time. I know your fondness for spaniels of which I have owned three springers, and each of them had the only cases of lice I have ever had in my kennel. The very best dog I ever had was a setter-labrador cross, the parents on both sides being from generations of workers. He was really a retrieving setter with a setter's coat and not too good in water. Now I only keep the one dog which in addition to being a watchdog must also be a maid of all work, so will be difficult to keep steady."

Hearing from Readers

It is always good to hear from readers, and especially to have such interesting points raised for discussion. This letter positively bristles with important matters to all those interested in training and working gundogs. In the first place I commend "Northerner's" perseverance with a gun-nervy dog (I doubt if it was truly gun-shy), and I imagine that he is going to be well rewarded for his patience, trouble and capital expenditure with this dog. As I have so often stated, the nervy ones, when got right, generally turn out the best workers. Another point I should like to bring out is that the writer uses a piece of car radiator hose as a dummy, which I have frequently recommended, and his dog seems to have developed an excellent nose.

Indeed, there appear to be only two "faults" in this young labrador—reluctance to "give," and a strong desire for canine companionship—both quite common failings, and both usually cured with very little difficulty. Pinching the lips of a dog which holds on to its retrieve often works, but it may have the effect of making the dog reluctant to come close, and even to start it circling the handler. The dog which grips its bird or other retrieve firmly is sometimes guilty of hard mouth, but by no means always, and indeed this is a fault which often passes once the season is well under way and several birds have been retrieved.

A Handler's Trick

There is, of course, the old handler's trick of stepping on the dog's foot as it sits or stands beside him, quickly removing the retrieve the moment the dog opens its mouth to give a little yelp! I do not recommend this practice, although I have seen it done even at field trials, with comparative success. This may be a case where an edible reward will do the trick. I do not generally recommend this because it is liable to make the average dog *too* quick to spit out its retrieve if it knows a reward is going to be given. However, in a case like this it might pay off to make the dog sit in front of the handler gripping the retrieve, to show it and let it sniff the reward, and to present it the moment the retrieve is released. I usually make a practice of saying "gently" as I receive the dummy, right from the start of training, and I find that most dogs soon associate this command with giving up the dummy, and drop it in to my hand when I utter it. The reward idea will probably work in this case, and it should only be kept up until the dog will "give" willingly. I always make a point of patting a dog and saying "good dog" as I receive a retrieve from it, and this I believe is appreciated by the pupil. Who does not welcome praise?

My correspondent's method of exercising his dog is excellent, and I commend this to readers. Indeed, I frequently exercise my dogs in this manner, allowing them to run behind the car for gradually increasing distances, and at varying speeds, along a good hard road which runs through the wood opposite the kennels, upon which there is hardly any traffic except an occasional timber lorry. The practice should be started very gently, and speeds gradually increased. Stops for a breather and a drink should be frequent (luckily my wood has several small ponds and ditches close to the road), and as the dog becomes harder and harder the pace and distances can be increased. My old labrador dog is quite capable of doing a steady 25 m.p.h. when in condition, but over short distances only, of course. Exercise by means of a bicycle is also useful, and the handler can ride round the farm tracks and along hard rides in the woods at varying speeds, thus giving his dog or dogs some hard running.

The throwing of discipline to the winds when another dog is sighted is quite common, but usually only arises among dogs which are unused to canine companions and which are kennelled alone. It is true that any properly trained dog should be capable of being stopped

no matter how great the temptation it is suffering from, and I dare say a long check-cord, which could be stepped on when the pupil dashes off to greet a dog, might be useful when at exercise.

However, the real answer is to accustom the dog to others of its species, and in any event much of this desire for company will depart with age, experience and serious work. If it could be arranged, someone to intercept the dog during its flight from handler's heel to the strange dog encountered during a walk might work wonders, especially if the interceptor could crack a whip or in some other way deter the dog from its object. I am always rather glad when the owner of "the other dog" shoos one of my dogs away in no uncertain manner, and if he gives it a tap with a lead or stick I am not put out about it.

"Northerner's" method of teaching a dog to look for hand signals is novel and effective. This expedient is no doubt excellent for the man who has only one or two dogs to train, but I doubt if it is more effective than the two and three dummy system (or what the Americans term the "baseball diamond" method) where several dogs have to be trained. The latter method also has the advantage of teaching the dog retrieving as well, and it connects the arm signals with the direction to go for a retrieve and not for a meal, although this is a minor point.

In actual practice I have found that most dogs, even spaniels, quickly learn to look to you and obey direction signals (in differing degrees of accuracy) merely by using my hands a lot when working them for dummies (or for rabbits in the pen in the case of spaniels). Almost any puppy can be made hand-conscious from a very early age by having the handler throw in different directions pieces of biscuit or other edible delicacy, in the same way that reluctant puppies may be induced to enter cover.

Wood-Chewing Cure

The cure for chewing woodwork is an excellent one. In fact, I have tried it myself and some years ago recommended the Renardine idea in these pages. Chewers are a confounded nuisance and do a lot of damage and cause a lot of trouble and expense in a kennel, as I know only too well. It usually arises from two main causes—boredom and lack of bones to chew. Some dogs are always troublesome with their teeth in this way, and as stuff like Renardine is positively repulsive to all dogs (indeed, to most animals I believe) woodwork which has been fairly recently coated with it will be left alone. However, that is the snag as I see it. The spots likely to be attacked have to be frequently dressed with this smelly solution.

The last item of interest from my correspondent's letter is his reference to lice. It is true that lice (pediculi) will attack woolly-coated dogs like spaniels much more enthusiastically than they will harsh coated dogs like labradors. Some spaniels become so badly infested with lice round the ears that it is extremely difficult to get rid of them. Where the hair is very thick, as it is around the ears, it should be clipped, and the dog dressed with an oily solution and preferably one to which a small amount of paraffin (lamp oil) has been added. Paraffin will destroy the nits, or eggs of the lice, which adhere to the hairs, and which would otherwise hatch out at a later date.

Bathing with a good insect dressing is also effective, as is dusting with one of the insect powders. The best plan, once the dog has been cleared of the lice is to disinfect the bed, kennel and utensils, and to keep the dog and its bed dusted with good insect powder. Dusting the dog in this way will also minimise the chances of it becoming infected by any parasitic disease, such as sarcoptic mange, but it should be carried out at least once a week, winter and summer.

* * *

The judges for the South Eastern Gundog Society's Open A.V. Retriever Field Trial, to be held on October 27 at Clandon Park, Clandon, near Guildford, Surrey, by kind permission of Colonel The Right Hon. The Earl of Onslow, M.C., T.D., will be Mr. P. M. G. Fraser, Mr. P. R. A. Moxon and Mr. W. Cass. Schedules may be obtained from the Hon. Field Trial Secretary, Mr. G. S. Smith, 11a High Street, Banstead, Surrey. 'Phone Burgh Heath 1484.

Hope Deferred?

(Continued from page 639)

day with 46 brace in spite of the difficult conditions.

In the light of the experience gained during these three days, we are to shoot each beat once more. This decision has been made entirely in the interests of the moor itself. It was thought that the stock at that point was more than it was prudent to leave to carry on through the winter; and from what I have myself seen, I agree with this decision.

I am entirely at a loss to explain how the moor has made such a wonderful and unexpected recovery. With other moors in the vicinity giving better results than expected, migration as a solution seems out of the question, and I can only suppose that every hen grouse on the moor must have contributed her share by laying a good clutch of eggs, and by bringing up her brood with exceptionally happy results. I think too that Nature often responds in an exceptional way when there are open spaces waiting to be filled.

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The Rabbit, by Harry V. Thompson and Alastair N. Worden (Collins, 16s.). Ever since myxomatosis was identified in 1953 amongst rabbits in Kent, the life of our most important wild mammal pest has undergone a remarkable change. No moment could be better for the introduction of this most up-to-date monograph in the New Naturalist Series, and the authors are closely associated, one directly, the other indirectly, with the government's survey of the disease.

I was interested to read the views of the authors, in the Introduction, stated thus: "Most competent observers would agree with us, however, that the rabbit is in reality an almost unmitigated pest, and that the damage it does far outweighs its contribution to the national larder and the fur trade." Personally, as one who shared in the successful control of rabbits over thousands of acres of farmland, I would have preferred to have read that the rabbit "*can* be an almost unmitigated pest, and, if not properly controlled, as it *can* be, the damage it may do . . ." I was also pleasantly interested in the last lines of the chapter "In Conclusion." Say the authors: "Complete elimination is probably an impossibility, but we have, as never before, an opportunity to control the rabbit and to make it an interesting but no longer ubiquitous member of our fauna."

It is quite impossible in the space of a short review to do justice to this book, or to quote from the many interesting facts and statistics given, and I say at once that anyone interested in the rabbit and the problems it poses should obtain a copy of "The Rabbit." I do not agree with quite a lot of what the authors have to say, for, rightly or wrongly, I consider that the "back room boys" of today are inclined to theorise and take the work of others for granted, good young scientists though they are. Admittedly, I have never worked in a laboratory, but a great deal of my life has been spent down rabbit holes, as it were.

The book contains a whole filing cabinet of facts, or of alleged facts. As an instance (and I'm darned if I am going to quote the old table concerning how many rabbits eat as much pasture as a sheep!): "In 1948, from all counties of England and Wales, over 7,500 tons of home-produced rabbits were sent by rail, equivalent to over 7 million rabbits." "It has been estimated . . . that the annual turnover in rabbits is (or was!) between 60 and 100 million . . ." "In Australia, rabbits will travel several miles daily to a water hole, and, particularly in the far west in times of drought, are destroyed by poisoning the water, sometimes as many as a hundred thousand being killed in one night." The foregoing quoted facts should alone be sufficient to whet the appetite of those interested in the rabbit.

To give a further idea of the scope of this book, I quote a few only of the chapter-headings: Classification and Distribution; Ecology; Disease and parasites; Myxomatosis; Damage to Crops; Methods of Control and the Rabbit-Trapping Industry. Among the Appendices: Legal Aspects; Statistical Tables Referred to in the Text.

The book runs to 230-odd pages and is illustrated with 16 excellent photographic plates.—"Tower-Bird."

Gorillas Were My Neighbours, by Fred G. Merfield, with Harry Miller (Longmans, Green, 18s.). The chief interest of the author, who has been described as the greatest white hunter in Africa, has always been the rare and gigantic gorilla, and he eventually penetrated the remote and little-known Mendjin country, where, by the exercise of courage and persistence, he made friends with the wild natives, and also fully justified the title of this book.

Having arrived in some of the most difficult terrain of his career, Merfield set up house among the Mendjins and the gorillas, and from then on for many years, led a most remarkable life, together with a young wife fresh from a London suburb. During their primitive existence they acquired unique knowledge concerning the giant apes and many other creatures.

Here is a story without parallel in its own field, almost unsurpassed for excitement in contemporary fiction—a fascinating, true story of the adventures and business of a master white hunter engaged in supplying zoos and museums with rare creatures, while studying and recording a whole host of unusual subjects. The book is full illustrated with fine photographs concerned with the expedition and home life of the Merfields.

Jungle Fever, by Ernst Zwilling (Souvenir Press, 81 Peters Court, Bayswater, W.2, 18s.). Ernst Zwilling is a great white hunter, and his books enjoy tremendous popularity in a number of European countries. This is his first to appear in England, and tells of his expeditions into French Equatorial Africa, to bring back animals for some of the largest zoos and to photograph them, for the author is of the "modern school" of hunter who prefers the Leica to the shotgun.

The expedition provided sufficient adventures to last a lifetime for many another man. They ranged from the difficulties of bringing up young gorillas which insisted on apertifs and noodles with tomato sauce as their staple diet, to the terrifying experience of being completely lost in the dense jungle that the native bearers just wanted to lie down and die. From the dangerous tracking of bull elephants, to the very rare experience of hunting pygmy elephants.

Another highlight was a visit to the fabulous Sultan Rei-Bouba, a jungle potentate living in magnificent splendour, husband of a reputed 800 wives, whose warriors still wear chain-mail armour, and whose ceremonies would not seem out of place in the Middle Ages.

The book is very fully illustrated with fine, unusual photographs.

The London Zoo, by Philip Street (Odhams Press, 16s.). The London Zoo is the oldest and most famous zoo in the world, and was opened to the public by the Zoological Society of London more than a century and a quarter ago. Since that time, its collection of wild creatures has never been equalled in size or variety anywhere.

The author, who has written the fascinating story of this national institution with the approval and fullest co-operation of the Zoological Society, is a distinguished zoologist himself, and, after giving readers a brief history of the zoo—its origin and development—and of the Zoological Society and the work of some of its most famous officials, places the emphasis on the animals kept at the zoo and the general conditions there. Finally, he gives an intriguing glimpse into the future with an account of a million-pound re-building plan which, spread over ten years, will make the London Zoo the best equipped and most modern one in the world.

The book is well illustrated with photographs, and has a Preface by Dr. L. Harrison Matthews, Director and Permanent Secretary to the Zoological Society.

Dog Days, by Ross Santee (Scribner, 21s.). The author is generally considered to be one of the finest artist-writers and one of the most authentic in the American West. A well-known reviewer recently wrote of him: "Ross Santee, the unpretentious old cowhand and horse-wrangler, ranks high indeed, not only as an artist, but as a teller of simple and curiously charming tales . . . there is nothing arty or strained or high-falutin in the man's work, and to the connoisseurs he is the real thing."

In his new book, Ross Santee writes of his boyhood in a little Iowa town, his reminiscences centring round the various dogs he knew in those distant days. It is written with fine simplicity, humour, and tenderness, and is fully illustrated by the author.

Buffalo Bill and the Wild West, by Victor Weybright and Henry Blackman Sell (Hamish Hamilton, 35s.). Many—and how many!—biographies and other books have been written about the last of the great scouts, William F. Cody, or, to give him his more popular name, "Buffalo Bill." This present volume differs from the rest in many ways, and chiefly because it is the first pictorial biography of this "man and legend," and is lavishly illustrated with no less than 137 half-tones and 39 line illustrations (including dozens of pictures which have never been reproduced before), a four-colour frontispiece, and end-paper maps.

In fast-moving narrative the authors have recaptured the life and times of this colourful hero whose youth and life on the plains have become a shifting panorama of adventures—fighting the Red Indians; the Pony Express; the bison herds; the construction of the railroads.

Later, Cody became an international showman, his Wild West Show at its height having a cast of over 500 with which he toured the U.S.A., England, and Europe. The authors have given us a very human story, backed up by official documents and reports, of Cody's life of ups and downs, his family life, and his relations with others.

One of the most fascinating sections of the book deals with Buffalo Bill's visits to England. Queen Victoria attended his great show at Earl's Court, as did the Prince of Wales, Mr. Gladstone, and the young Winston Churchill. At this period, the subject of this first-class biography became the rage of London society.

Animals After Dark, by Maxwell Knight (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 15s.). This book, as the title makes clear, deals fully with the nocturnal life of animals. The author stresses that few British animals are exclusively nocturnal, and goes into the reason for this, explaining why those creatures which mainly favour the hours of darkness have come to do so.

Most interesting are Mr. Knight's fascinating and instructive anecdotes, mostly based on personal experience, for not only do they illustrate many of the points he makes, but they demonstrate admirably the patience required for the endurance of many hours of acute discomfort in the branches of a tree, or on the rain-sodden banks of a river at night.

The book is illustrated with 16 pages of unusually clear photographs.

Infancy in Animals, by Maurice Burton, D.Sc. (Hutchinson, 18s.). In this book the author seeks, largely by the aid of personal observation, to examine the significance of infancy, the growth and development of the young animal, and the varying relationship between parent and child. Like his previous work, "Animal Courtship," it is full of curious facts and stories which surprise and delight the reader. Indeed, this reviewer was unable to put the book down until he had perused its 220-odd pages, illustrated with drawings by Jane Burton.

Though Dr. Burton ranges over the whole animal kingdom, he pays most attention to birds and mammals. The layman will find this a fascinating book for general reading, and from it he will learn an extraordinary number of facts about animals which will add to his general knowledge. Most interesting, perhaps, is the detailed description of the birth of the young kangaroo. Many stories go the rounds of how this is accomplished, but the facts related by the author separate the truth from "fiction," as indeed do so many of the facts which pack one of the most entertaining books I have read for some time.

African Wonderland, by James Riddell (Hale, 18s.). Here is the record of a traveller who keeps his eyes and his notebook open. He is no de-luxe traveller either. He chugged down the Zambezi to the Indian Ocean on an old river boat; he flew in a private aeroplane over a flooded game reserve; he climbed the Mlanje mountain, where he lived for four days on tablets only. He maintains that never in his life has he seen so much water as during his lone journey across Africa during the rainy season.

This book, illustrated with many fine photographs, is an account of that journey—through East Africa, Nyasaland, the game country of the Northern Transvaal, and part of the Union.

Hunting the Hard Way, by Howard **Hill** (Hale, 16s.). In this book, the author of that best-selling "Wild Adventure," relates many other exciting and dangerous adventures while "hunting the hard way—with bow and arrow. He claims to have hunted and shot every kind of game animal on or near the continent of North America—risking his life continually in pursuit of buffalo, bear, panther, jaguar, wild boar, alligator, and shark.

Of this book the publishers claim: "Never has there been a book on archery that combines so much adventure with step by step instructions on how to make bows and arrows and a brief history of the sport itself."

Fifty-two on-the-spot photographs and dozens of action drawings add greatly to the exciting reading which this book provides.

From Hobo to Hunter, by C. T. Stoneham (Long, 15s.). This is the autobiography of the well-known author ("Big Stuff") and naturalist who, in his time, has been actor, hobo, navvy, lumberjack, barber, waiter, soldier, and white hunter, and has therefore a very varied and exciting selection of experiences upon which to build his personal story.

At seventeen, he ran away from school and sought adventure in Canada. We read of his return, after the last war, to East Africa and his re-discovery of the wilderness in which he had previously spent so many satisfying years. He describes the hardships of an under-dog in a land where to starve or freeze was often the fate of the homeless, and the risk and thrills of big game hunting. And,

BOOKS

naturally enough, in the course of such a colourful life, his stocks have sometimes risen high, sometimes fallen to ground level.

The book is fully illustrated with very clear photographs.

Mountain Flowers, by John Raven and Max Walters (Collins, 25s.). This is the first book ever published on the wild flowers of British mountains, and, under their famous New Naturalist Series, the publishers have done well in devoting a volume to the botanical riches of the admittedly less spectacular mountains of these islands.

The authors have based this well-illustrated book (16 fine photographs in colour, 28 in black-and-white, and 20 distribution maps) on their personal experiences of flower-hunting in the hills of Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and the Lake District. Also brought into full play is their wide knowledge of the scientific and historical background of our mountain flora.

Claim the publishers: "If British alpines cannot boast the wonderful sheets of colour that attract thousands every year to Switzerland, the rarity and individual beauty of many of the species provide an excitement of a different and perhaps more 'refined' quality . . . During the last few years no less than five species hitherto unknown in Britain, or long since thought extinct, have been found in Scotland, and the stories of their discovery are fully told by the authors."

Particularly interesting to the layman are the maps showing the distribution of each series of mountain plant.

Your Dog's Health Book, edited by Jack Denton Scott (The Macmillan Company of New York and London, 35s.). Former dog editor of *Field and Stream* (the famous American sporting journal) and editor of this volume, Mr. Scott has planned the work well, for no less than twenty-nine true dog experts, all experienced and able practising veterinarians, explain, in clear and precise detail, everything that is necessary in the way of introducing a healthier, happier life for your dog.

Apart from housing, grooming, feeding, training, and general management, they point out the symptoms of disorder and disease so that they can be easily recognisable, and they tell you what to do, and specify when treatment must be given by the one man who can help—your vet. Entire chapters are devoted to major canine diseases: distemper, hard-pad, rabies, and many more. Here, too, are actual step-by-step procedures for bathing, clipping, first-aid and whelping.

In short, two hundred and seventy-odd pages of practical and authoritative information by dog experts.

Ingo, by Walter von Sanden (Museum Press, 8s. 6d.). This charming little book of just over a hundred pages, well illustrated with photographs of Ingo himself, and translated from the German by Desmond I. Vesey, is the true story of an otter. Ingo came to his owner from far away, and we learn how he settled down in his new home, and of his adventures by land and water.

Most countrymen, at one time or another, have had a desire to possess a tame otter. In this book, describing the "taming" and home life of Ingo, every nature-lover, young or old, will find a number of points of interest, not only in the text, but also among the unique photographs.

Horse Psychology, by Moyra Williams (Methuen, 16s.). The author's almost unique combination of clinical experience with the professional care of horses enables her to see the problems of animal intelligence and animal neuroses in a new light. And her attitude towards these subjects is one which might profitably be adopted by many animal psychologists.

In this book she sets out to explain in simple language what goes on in the mind of a horse—the basic needs and instincts which motivate its behaviour, its special senses, the way it learns. General principles of psychology are illustrated by personal observations and original experiments described in non-technical terms. The book is illustrated with numerous text drawings by Sylvia Treadgold.

Ponycraft, written and illustrated by Anne Bullen (Blandford Press, 7s. 6d.). Anne Bullen needs no introduction to lovers of the horse, for she and her husband have built up one of the most successful studs of children's riding ponies in this country, and her pencil drawings and oil paintings of horses and people are widely known. In her latest book she deals concisely and thoroughly with every aspect of pony-craft from choosing and buying a pony, through its training and management, to show and hunting days.

Her "portrait gallery" at the end includes eight of the best known breeds in the British Isles.

Polo, by John Board (Faber, 30s.). Polo and polo ponies are the first love of that expert and competent judge on horses of most kinds, John Board, who, for the past two decades has been right in the centre of polo affairs, and is considered to be the leading writer on the subject in the world. Once the amusement of the privileged few, polo has now received a tremendous surge towards popularity, and, the author has designed this book primarily for the new generation; for those boys and young men who may one day, perhaps, play for England. He goes very thoroughly into principles and practice, teamwork and tactics, horsemanship and stable management, including also a valuable chapter on "Striking."

The book is fully illustrated with Maior Board's own drawings which undoubtedly enhance his already great reputation as a painter of horses in action. Included are a number of diagrams, in two colours, explaining tactics and rules.

Man Under Water, by Henry Billings (Lutterworth Press, 12s. 6d.). The wonders—and the dangers—of the underwater world have been the subject of man's interest and ingenuity ever since the legendary Nicolas Pexe first dived into the whirlpool of Charybdis. For centuries he has sought and developed new ways of staying under water for long periods, either in peaceful pursuits of pearls, sunken treasure, and the mineral wealth of the ocean bed, or, in grimmer times to sink enemy shipping and to recover trapped mariners in disabled submarines. Henry Billings tells the fascinating story of his efforts, of bathyschapes and bathyspheres, of diving bells and record dives and describes the epics of the recovery of the Hispaniola treasure, the recovery of nearly £5,000,000 worth of gold bullion from the s.s. Mauretania, a task which took seven years, and the rescue, in 1939, of the crew of the U.S. submarine Squalus.

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(Continued on page 654)

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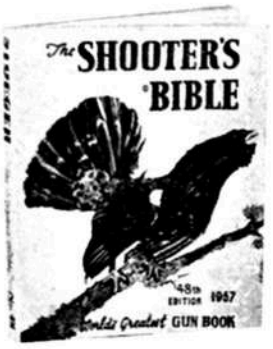

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Potted Reviews

The following books are amongst those which have been reviewed fully in The Shooting Times *during the last six months:*

Kingdom of the Beasts, by Julian Huxley and W. Suschitzky (Thames and Hudson, 50s.). Suschitzky, justly famous as an artist in the photography of animals has, in the 175 fine full-page photogravure plates (three of them in colour) which illustrate this splendid volume, given us a rare, exciting, and unique collection of animal character studies, ranging widely over most divisions of the mammal class. Particularly will photographers welcome his accompanying essay on the art of photographing animals. To this quite remarkable portrait gallery Julian Huxley has provided a most interesting text.

Altogether a magnificent and scholarly work, worthy of a famous photographic artist and scientist.

The Birds of the British Isles, by David Armitage Bannerman and George E. Lodge (Oliver and Boyd, 63s.). This, the fifth volume of a "classic" work, is devoted entirely to the diurnal birds of prey, and will certainly prove the most interesting of the series so far published to the game preserver, the falconer, and all who admire the swift, stream-lined beauty and ferocity of winged predators. In no other work on British birds, it is quite safe to say, can such full and intimate details be found.

The Lowlands of Scotland, by Maurice Lindsay (Hale, 18s.). In this, the second of two volumes which the author has devoted to the Lowlands of Scotland, he continues his lively reassessment of Lowland values. Included in his survey are Edinburgh (two chapters on this) and the Lothians; the Border counties of Berwick, Roxburgh and Selkirk; Peebles and Lanark; Dumfriesshire and Galloway; Ayrshire and Renfrewshire. This, with its companion volume, forms a full, vivid interpretation of the Lowland scene.

Happy Countryman, by E. L. Roberts (Herbert Jenkins, 16s.). Born and bred a countryman, the author has spent his whole life, so to speak, off the beaten track, in remote places as widely diverse as the Outer Hebrides and the east coast marshes. His delightful book—and a better title for it would be hard to find—is the outcome of the close observations and recordings of a good naturalist, and of the kind who, far from scorning the man with a gun, the fowler, and the gamekeeper, is on the best of terms with them, and describes many of the interesting characters he has met afield.

Instructions to Young Naturalists, by Maxwell Knight (Museum Press, 10s. 6d.). The famous naturalist and popular B.B.C. broadcaster describes the lives and habits of our British reptiles and amphibians, and also tells us about some of the other creatures that live in ponds, many of which form the food of snakes, lizards, frogs, toads and newts with which this book is mainly concerned.

In addition, full instructions are given on how to keep these creatures in captivity.

Last of the Curlews, by Fred Bodsworth (Museum Press, 10s. 6d.). The eskimo curlew, originally one of Canada's most abundant game-birds, flew a gauntlet of shot each spring and autumn, and, flying it, learned too slowly the fear of the hunter's gun that was the essential of survival. Now the species lingers on precariously at extinction's lip.

The author, a fine naturalist, in this well-written work, relates the odyssey of one such bird and its mate, and we follow them throughout their season and their long journey. The book is very well and freely illustrated by T. M. Shortt, whose drawings do full justice to the text.

The Luger Pistol and **Cartridges for Collectors,** by Fred A. Datig (Fadco, 54s. each). Both obtainable from Arthur F. Bird, 66 Chandos Place, W.C.2. Two major ballistic works by an American author who, despite the fact that he is not yet thirty, has been an author, actor, publisher, professional soldier and small arms expert, and who owns one of the finest collections of automatic pistol cartridges in his country, as well as a noted collection of modern military dress daggers.

Collectors will find these well produced and fully illustrated volumes the most complete answers to any questions on the subjects.

Successful Trapping Methods, by Walter Chansler (Macmillan, 25s.). The work of an experienced trapper telling in great detail how to trap all species of American (and Canadian) fur game.

Those who trap only vermin in this country will read of the greater trapping scene with interest, and many hints given will be found to apply to the very limited scope of trapping and skinning over here.

Salmon: How to Catch Them, by Coombe Richards (Herbert Jenkins, 3s. 6d.). Like every other angler, Mr. Richards has theories, but he is a consistently successful practical salmon fisherman. He really *knows* "how to catch them," and he has succeeded in passing on his knowledge in easily understood words. Many points are illustrated by personal experiences, and as one reads the book there is a feeling that one is receiving an angling lesson from Mr. Richards at the riverside. Here, at less than the cost of 20 cigarettes, is a really valuable book.

James Beard's Fish Cookery, by James Beard (Faber & Faber, 21s.). Mr. Beard writes not merely for the housewife and professional cook, but for the gourmets and wishful thinkers who read about food for the sheer joy of it.

A most comprehensive volume with recipes ranging from the exotic to the familiar—barbecued swordfish steak to broiled codfish.

Dogs of All Ages, by Elian J. Finbert (Cassell, 10s. 6d.). A collection of stories (and very good stories most of them are) of famous dogs throughout the ages, of their remarkable deeds of fidelity, valour, and intelligence, told with Æsopian simplicity. For all who appreciate the more noble virtues of the "friend of man," this is a book to treasure.

The Grey Geese Call, by Bill Powell (Herbert Jenkins, 16s.). The author, a professional wildfowler on Solway, needs no introduction to readers of *The Shooting Times*.

His enthusiasm for the sport of wildfowling; his appreciation of dawns and sunsets; his dry sense of humour; his general attitude towards tactics and ballistics—these and other matters, including rocket-netting and punt-gunning, go to form an excellent book on goose shooting on Solway, and one that should be read by all those who visit this goose haunt, or who intend to do so.

They Walk the Wild Places, by J. Wentworth Day (The Blandford Press, 25s.). This book, beautifully illustrated by Roland Green, with many illustrations in colour, concerns the remaining wild animals living in Britain. As can be expected in any book by this author, there is some first-class descriptive writing and this latest work by Day is the answer to anyone wanting to give a young person interested in the mammals of the British Isles a useful and well-illustrated book on the subject.

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NEW BOOKS

(Continued from page 651)

For Poachers Only, by Jack Chance (A. & C. Black, 10s. 6d.). Illustrated with ten drawings by Bernard Venables and Alex Jardine, this book takes its title from the first of a collection of half-a-dozen stories describing certain fishing incidents. However, these stories are far more than colourless, or even coloured writing about angling forays. In all except the first, the characters recur, and the adventures which befall them are both exciting and amusing. Indeed, the rather old-fashioned Scottish family background against which the stories unfold forms a truly delightful setting, and the characters are equally delightful, and faithfully drawn.

To be a Fisherman, by Roy Beddington (Bles, 16s.). Well known to readers of sporting and country journals, this author-artist, with pen and brush, describes in this well-produced, well - illustrated book various fishing adventures which are both interesting and instructive. From it, the angling tyro will learn a very great deal, but so, also, will the more experienced fisherman, for Mr. Beddington is a human mine of information on a large number of aspects of the gentle art which are by no means "common property." His fishing lore, and his country lore, wedded by good writing to the ability to project his knowledge to the less knowledgable, combine to form a book which we do not hesitate to recommend to anglers of every kind.

Salt Water Angling, by Michael Kennedy (Hutchinson, 30s.). As the complete sea angler and foremost expert and writer of our time on the subject, Michael Kennedy needs no further introduction nor recommendation. This is the natural successor to his brilliant "The Sea Angler's Fishes," and is well worthy of its predecessor. It covers every aspect of modern sea angling including an interesting chapter on fishlore, and is without doubt the best book of its kind and a must for the angler's library.

Discovering London, by Norman Hillson (Herbert Jenkins, 15s.). Here is something entirely new in guide-books to London, and we prophesy unusually good sales for its author and publishers. Particularly would we recommend it to countrymen visiting the Metropolis and having a few days to spare.

The book is planned in the form of ten tours which together embrace all places of interest between the Tower of London in the east and Hyde Park Corner in the west, between Charterhouse in the north and Bankside in the south. Each tour described can be made comfortably on foot in the course of a single day. Along the line of our expeditions Mr. Hillson (a scholarly guide with a quiet sense of humour and a great sense for historic values both ancient and more modern) draws attention to the countless places of interest met *en route,* outlining the significance of each with colourful flashes of tradition.

Complementary to the author's text are no less than three hundred sketches by Will Farrow which, set close against the relevant narrative, provide instant identification of the places and buildings described.

Here, indeed, is a valuable guide and reference book with which every visitor, foreign or British, to London should be armed.

Forthcoming Books

Shooting

A Partridge Year, by Esmond Lynn-Allen and A. W. P. Robertson (Geoffrey Bles, 12s. 6d.). **October.**

Natural History

My Family and Other Animals, by Gerald Durrell (Rupert Hart-Davis, 18s.). **October.**

Animals Are My Life, by Lorenz Hagenbeck (Bodley Head, 25s.). **October.**

Animal Safari, by Lutz Heck (Methuen, 21s.). **October.**

My Way of Hunting, by Robert H. Rockwell with Jeanne Rockwell (Robert Hale, 18s.). **October.**

Animals and Other People, by Louis Bromfield (Cassell, 18s.). **October.**

British Trees, by Miles Hadfield (Dent, 30s.). **Early 1957.**

Everyman's Wild Flowers and Trees, by Miles Hadfield (Dent, 15s.). **October.**

Herbaceous Garden Flora, by F. K. Makins (Dent, 30s.). **Early 1957.**

The Tropical World, by E. Aubert de la Rue, F. Bourlière and J. P. Harroy (Harrap, 63s.). **November.**

The Life of Mammals and Man, by J. Z. Young (Clarendon Press, 50s.). **Autumn.**

A Popular Study of Penguins, by L. E. Richdale (Clarendon Press, 35s.). **Autumn.**

Devoted to Birds, by Frank Crew (Frederick Muller, 6s.). **Autumn.**

Angling

Freshwater Fishes, by Otto Schindler (Thames and Hudson, 21s.). **Autumn.**

Sea Trout: How to Catch Them, by F. W. Holiday. **Artificial Flies: How to Tie Them,** by L. Vernon Bates (Herbert Jenkins, 3s. 6d. each).

Fly Fisher's Pie, by Joscelyn Lane (Herbert Jenkins, 15s.).

Travel and Adventure

Men, Books and Mountains, by Leslie Stephen (Hogarth Press, 18s.). **Autumn.**

Winter Fury, by Raymond Lambert and Claude Kogan (Hutchinson, 18s.).

Call of the Tiger, by Col. A. N. W. Powell (Robert Hale, 16s.). **January.**

Twelve Came Back, by Peter Lancaster Brown (Robert Hale, 18s.). **March.**

Zanzabuku, by Lewis Cotlon (Robert Hale, 18s.). **January.**

The Sea Lark, by Thomas Helm (Harrap, 15s.). **Autumn 1956 or Spring 1957.**

Riding

One Jump Ahead, by Pat Smythe, O.B.E. (Cassell, 13s. 6d.). **October.**

The Spanish Riding School, by Mathilde Windisch-Graetz (Cassell, 42s.). **November.**

Fiction

The Hunters and the Hunted, by Ivan Bahriany (Macmillan, 15s.). **October.**

AN UNFORGETTABLE PORTRAYAL OF A GREAT ROYAL SPORTSMAN AND A GREAT SHOT

The King in His Country

by

AUBREY BUXTON

The late King George VI was an almost uniquely skilled and ardent exponent of the art of shooting. This intimate account of his pleasures and achievements with the gun will be of absorbing interest to all sportsmen and countrymen. Indeed, the anecdotes so liberally scattered through these pages make the book a most palatable one for its narrative values alone.

The author—himself a naturalist and sportsman, who often shot in the Royal company—is admirably fitted for the pleasant task of telling this story.

The photographs reproduced in the book have never been previously published, and there are fourteen of them, including a frontispiece in colour. 21*s. net*

LONGMANS

BERNARD FERGUSSON has this to say (in *The Sunday Times*) concerning "The King in His Country"

"Should this book go alongside the Royal biographies by Sir Harold Nicolson and Mr. John Gore, or with such classics as 'Letters to Young Shooters' and 'The High Tops of Black Mount'?

"It is the life of King George VI as a shooting man, superbly done by a Norfolk neighbour. Although its scope as a Royal biography is limited by its purpose, we see the King at close range and on neighbourly terms throughout; and as the shooting classic which it will assuredly become, it presents an unsurpassable picture of the best shooting traditions of the day.

"Mr. Buxton has used the King's game-book as a thread running through the tale, and has abstracted pages to serve as footnotes. From the game-book, too, he has made many sensible deductions, and has reproduced as one of fourteen admirable illustrations the first page of all. There in the schoolboy hand which the King never lost, and in which many officers are proud to have had their commissions signed, we read the record of 'My first day's shooting. I used a single-barrelled muzzle-loader with which Grandpapa, Uncly Eddy and Papa all started shooting. I shot three rabbits.'

"Mr. Buxton, as a Norfolk man, devotes perhaps a disproportionate amount of his book to the wildfowling, but he is justified in insisting that the King, so much of whose heart was in Norfolk, was a devotee. ('Snow and very cold east wind. I spent four hours in a hide in a kale field.') Happy days at Glamis and Balmoral, at Walden and Gannochy, are here, too, as well as three stupendous and hard-working days at Lochinch. Two outside contributions have been prayed in aid: the one, a gloriously entertaining account, by the Master of Elphinstone and Lord Eldon, of the day at Balmoral in 1945 when the party strove to fill every column in the game-book; the other a happy description of the annual holiday at Balmoral, written by an anonymous regular guest. So the book moves on to the last day, when he killed three hares, each farther out than the other, with the last three shots of his life.

"Many who know nothing of shooting will enjoy this book for its portrayal of a beloved Sovereign in his happiest hours; and the author has proved himself the best possible choice for the rare privilege accorded him."

Wildfowling Clubs

The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland: Hon. Secretary, Brig. G. D. Holmes, Burnham Thorpe, Nr. King's Lynn, Norfolk.

At the monthly meeting of Yarmouth and District Wildfowlers' Association at the Salisbury Arms, Cobholm, the main topic discussed was Sunday shooting on Breydon. Members were generally agreed that the whole matter had developed into a very complex affair now that the local order applied for by the East Suffolk County Council for Sunday protection had been turned down by the Home Secretary.

The boundary line of the East Suffolk County Council runs down the centre of the main channel outside the county borough of Yarmouth and a boundary stone on the south bank of Breydon marks the limit of the borough. Apart from the Norfolk County Council, Yarmouth was also granted Sunday protection.

The feeling was expressed that local wildfowlers must not only know what birds they can shoot, but also know exactly where boundaries of Norfolk, Suffolk and Yarmouth start and finish.

Mr. A. W. Gooch was elected a vice-president of the Association, which now has a membership exceeding fifty.

* * *

Monmouthshire County Council have agreed to withdraw their application to the Home Office for an order prohibiting Sunday shooting. Objections had been lodged by Mr. C. Brown, secretary of the Severn Wildfowlers' Association, Mr. T. P. Williams, secretary of the Monmouth and district Conservative (Men's) Club and Mr. J. L. Page, Monmouth, on the ground that the order would deprive working men and agricultural workers etc. of almost their only opportunity of shooting.

A report submitted to the council by the agricultural committee said they had further considered the application in the light of those objections and recommended the application be withdrawn, which was agreed.

* * *

There will be a general meeting of the Kent Wildfowlers' Association at The Fox and Goose, Bapchild, on Saturday, September 29, at 7.30 p.m., when Mr. David McLean will show some of his films and coloured slides entitled "Pot Hunting with a Camera—Filming birds in the Highlands and East Anglia." Mr. David McLean is the son of Mr. Colin McLean and there is no doubt that this will be a first class evening.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

Sept. 29: Berkshire Down-the-Line Championship. Childrey C.P.S.C., near Wantage. 12 noon.

Sept. 30: Beverley & District G.C. 1.30 p.m. Members cup shoot.

Sept. 30: Coventry and District D. & G.C. Club Shoot. 7 p.m.

Oct. 6: Taunton & District G.C. Sporting shoot.

Oct. 6: Hayfield G.C., near Stockport. Members' Shoot.

Oct. 7: Harrogate G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot, 1.45 p.m.

Oct. 7: Bisley G.C., Brookwood, Surrey. Seager Evans Event. 10.30 a.m.

* * *

Reports and Results

The Bedford Gun Club held the second South of England Skeet Championship on Saturday, September 8, under good weather conditions. There were 64 entries for the 12-bore and 20-bore events. The five man team and two man team events were well supported.

With good targets, good backgrounds, good weather and good marksmanship the scores were high as shown below. The new 20-bore 40 bird event produced the very gratifying response of five complete squads and enthusiasm from the shooters. This event will be repeated, but instead of one class only it will be shot with Class A. 60 birds and Class B. 40 birds. The next shoot will include a 40 bird .410 gauge event.

Second South of England Skeet Championship 100 Birds 12-bore: Winner of the Frank Readhead Cup for the High Gun, M/Sgt. A. Morin 99. Class A.—1, L. J. Ervin 97; 2, R. E. Dutton 96; 3, E. L. Nichols 94; 4, J. Tindol 93; 5, C. L. Traylor 91.

Class B.—1, H. Morton 95; 2, L. Ervin, Jnr., 89; 3, A. E. Halsey 84; 4 and 5, J. Wolfe and A. Stokes 82.

Class C.—1, N. K. Bomford 37 ex 40; 2, H. Ball 33; 3, A. S. Manyweathers; 4, E. Arnold; 5, F. Ball.

20-bore Skeet Championship, Purcell Trophy—1, A. Morin 39 ex 40; 2, R. Wensley 38; 3, W. H. Gardner 34; after shoot with 4, J. Tindol; 5, R. D. Purcell.

Winning 5 man team, Morin, Tindol, L. J. Ervin, Mothersbough, Wolfe.

Winning 2 man team, L. J. Ervin and Tindol, 190 ex 200.

Winner of the international match, U.S.A. Morin, Ervin Snr., Tindol, Traylor and Ervin Jnr., 469 ex 500.

England team, R. Dutton, Morton, Nichols, Gardner, J. Dutton, 460 ex 500.

The club vice-chairman, Mr. R. D. Purcell, introduced Mrs. E. L. Nichols wife of the well-known shot who kindly presented the prizes. He also thanked all those who worked for the success of the meeting, M. and C. Tookey, A. S. Manyweathers, Ball, the Secretary H. C. Hill, Field Captain E. T. Peacock, Halliwell and all members and visitors who helped with the scoring etc.

There were seventeen 20 straights and four 40 straights during the day.

The club intends to hold a sporting shoot under Wappenshaw conditions early in December. Announcements later.

* * *

The second annual North Wales Open Skeet Championship was held on September 1 on the grounds of the **North Wales Gun Club** at Rhosesmor. The weather conditions were favourable for shooting inasmuch as the day was free of rain.

Nineteen guns competed in the 80 Bird Open Skeet Championship, which proved a most enjoyable shoot. Mr. Glynne Jones, the president of the club, welcomed competitors who turned up from various parts of the country including, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire. The standard of shooting was very good and two-thirds of the field obtained 80 per cent kills.

The field was divided into two classes "A" and "B." In Class "A" Mr. J. Wheater, Hull, led the field with a score of 77, this gaining the F. R. Readhead Challenge Cup, blazer badge and voucher prize; he was followed by Mr. T. E. Sanders (Neston) with 73; Mr. A. M. Toms (Bramhall) 72; Mr. G. Jones and Allan Jones (Rhosesmor) 71, and after a shoot-off Master Allan Jones took third place. Class "B" was won by Mr. C. Wilson (Stockport) with a score of 71, followed by Mr. Percy Wetton (Clitheroe) with a score of 70; Mr. B. B. Harrison 65, and Mr. A. T. Brown (St. Asaph) 61.

The North Wales Area Championship was won by Master Allan Jones of Rhosesmor, the youngest son of the President of the club, after a very severe duel with his father. A shoot-off over 20 targets was taken and the kills were equal at 18; a further 20 birds were taken and again the number of kills was equal at 19. Father and son then began their third final round over 3 pairs. Victory was gained by Allan who is 17 years of age, this being his fourth Skeet Open Competition and the first win of any description over Skeet making him a Champion Novice. He, therefore, succeeds his father who was 1955 Area Champion.

The 10 Bird D.T.L. Open Competition proved to be extremely popular among the shooters and a number of additional guns turned up for this competition. The field was divided into two classes and the winners of each class were:

Class "A," 1, D. T. Jones (Rhosesmor); 2, J. Wheater (Hull); 3, A. Pratt (Narborough); 4, G. Jones (Rhosesmor).

Class "B," 1, J. Williamson; 2, C. D. Lindsay (Chirk); 3, C. Wilson (Stockport); 4, W. O. Jones (St. Asaph).

The North Wales Gun Club is most grateful to the sportsmen who gave us their support in making this shoot a success. Our sincere thanks also to Mrs. A. Pratt of Narborough, who very kindly and charmingly presented the prizes, with a word of encouragement to each prizewinner.

Spear Fisherman

(Continued from page 644)

would soon be banned—wounded birds are a spur to all to improve rather than to stop their shooting, as it is with spear fishermen. The wildfowler with his cold and skilful pastime has much in common with the spear hunter. Both are continually being damned on the pretext of destroying wild animals. Both take very few individuals from populations of migratory animals and work hard for them, whereas the owner of a decoy pond, fishing net or line can take large numbers indiscriminately without criticism.

Any consideration of restrictions must take into account the guns in common use. These are mostly imported. It might be advisable to attempt to restrict the sale of the more powerful guns to prevent them being purchased by the young and irresponsible; all makes could also be examined and checked for safety devices.

If restrictions were imposed on the size of fish taken, they would have to apply to all methods of fishing. The establishment of sanctuary areas sounds attractive, but will have no effect on the wandering fish unless they can be informed.

On the other hand sanctuary areas for bathers is not at all a bad idea. There is a real danger that a bather might be seriously injured by a spear discharged on a crowded beach, though the spear fisherman, like the angler, will soon find that there are few fish in such places.

To call spear fishermen poachers is absurd. A poacher is a thief, no matter what romantic and humorous associations are attached to the word. Fish in the sea are the property of none, so the spear hunter is no more a thief than is the professional fisherman or angler.

Finally must be considered the abuses which may arise.

All swimmers are warned as a gesture of courtesy to keep away from anglers' lines. Unreasonable and ill-tempered anglers must not be surprised if, on occasions, they do not catch what they are fishing for. On one occasion a pier angler, who had been rather vehemently denouncing all bathers in general, was infuriated to land a 2lb. bass with a blue bow tie tied through its gills. It would be impossible, if ever desirable, to prohibit those with an original sense of humour from entering the sea.

Another possible abuse is the spearing of fish for sale. There are strong restrictions on the marketing of damaged fish which will soon stop any unscrupulous fishmongers from handling them.

The fantastic suggestion that our shores may soon be lapped with waters muddied by the blood of dying fish is too absurd. They are already washed with seas fouled by improperly treated sewage and oil discharged from ships. These require remedies. Meanwhile, the spear fisherman needs understanding and less tub-thumping. Like the wildfowler, he likes his sport because it requires a lot from him; it is an arduous, cold and exacting one, rewarded with few prizes. He is a definite individual also, eccentric in his dress, choosing comfort and practicality rather than sartorial elegance.

Forthcoming Field Trials

SECRETARIES OF FIELD TRIAL SOCIETIES ARE INVITED TO SEND US REPORTS OF THEIR TRIALS FOR PUBLICATION IN "THE SHOOTING TIMES." REPORTS SHOULD BE SENT DIRECT TO THE KENNEL EDITOR, MR. P. R. A. MOXON, HERNE COMMON, HERNE BAY, KENT.

Oct. 1 & 2: West Midland Field Trial Society (Spaniels). Longnor, near Shrewsbury. Secretary: T. J. Greatorex, Corndean, Hodnet, Shropshire.

Oct. 2: Essex Field Trial Society (Retriever Puppy and Non-Winners Stake). Secretary: A. R. Heasman, St. Aubyns, Saffron Walden, Essex.

Oct. 3: Northumberland and Durham Labrador Retriever Club (Open Stake). Ford. Judges: Capt. C. Laing, Mr. T. Dinwoodie, Mr. G. Douglas. Secretary: T. R. Hogg, School House, Ebchester, Consett.

Oct. 3 & 4: Golden Retriever Club of Scotland. Lennoxlove, Hadington. Non-Winner and AV. All-Aged Stakes. Secretary: J. Palmer Douglas, Midgard Hawick, Scotland.

Oct. 4 & 5: Yorkshire Retriever Field Trial Society. Clifton Castle, Masham, Yorks. Secretary: R. F. Bilton, 149 High Street, Hull.

Oct. 6: Kennel Club Puppy and Non-Winners Stake (Retrievers). Roffey, Great Dunmow, Essex. Judges: Mrs. W. J. Fellowes, Mr. J. Arthur Rank, J.P., Mr. W. Brunt and Mr. J. Chudley. Secretary: E. Holland Buckley, The Kennel Club, 84 Piccadilly, London, W.1.

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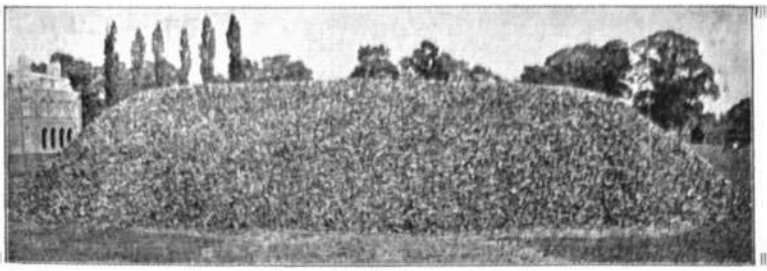

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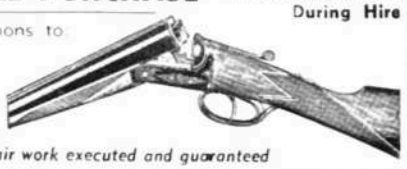

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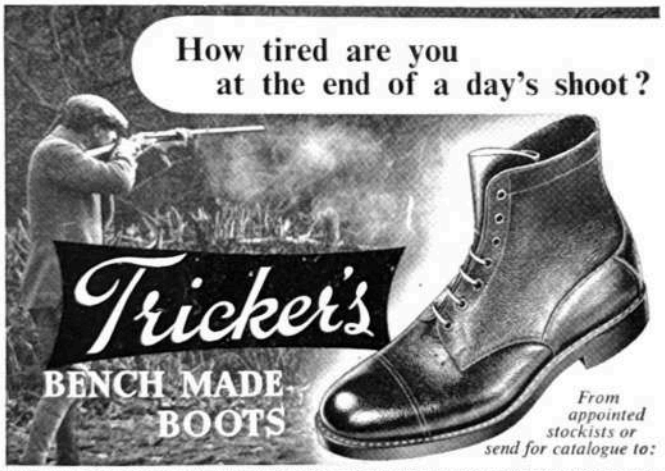

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